

TORONTO DISASTER RELIEF COMMITTEE

What's New?

Update on Pope Squat -- see [EVENTS](#).

New report "Can Canada afford to help cities, provide social housing and end homelessness?" See [RESOURCES/Reports](#)

Heat Alert Called! Vulnerable people told to go to shopping centres, no cooling centres opened. See [RESOURCES/Media Releases](#) for more.



General Members Meeting:
1st Thursday of every month

Next Meeting:
August 1, 2002, 6:30pm-8pm
All Saints Church (southeast corner of Sherbourne and Dundas, parking lot side entrance.) A light meal is provided. All are welcome!

Welcome to the TDRC website. We hope we find our online information informative and helpful. Please contact us with any comments.

Content from the 2002 TDRC Website

About TDRC

Who Are We and What Do We Do?

The Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC) is a group of social policy, health care and housing experts, academics, business people, community health workers, social workers, AIDS activists, anti-poverty activists, people with homelessness experience, and members of the faith community. We provide advocacy on housing and homelessness issues. We declare homelessness as a national disaster, and demand that Canada end homelessness by implementing a fully-funded National Housing Program through the One Percent Solution.

In the effort to end homelessness, we are active on numerous fronts. We provide coordination services for the National Housing and Homelessness Network. We are a prominent and highly recognized voice on the City of Toronto's Advisory Committee for Homeless and Socially Isolated Persons. We work closely with the Tent City community, supporting residents in their effort to relocate into housing on non-polluted lands. We research the issues and have produced numerous reports with our findings. We track the numbers of those who die on our city streets. We watch the homeless disaster worsen daily.

We Declare Homelessness a National Disaster

We have asked ourselves these questions: why is this human crisis not treated in the same way as other crises or disasters where people lose their housing and have their family and community networks disrupted, like the ice storm in Quebec and Eastern Ontario, or like the floods in Manitoba? Why are governments not responding to the physical and mental harm, including death, caused by being homeless? Why are they ignoring the spread of disease such as tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and hepatitis? Why is it that our public officials fail to recognize that tens of thousands of people without housing and without adequate food and health care constitutes one of the largest and most serious national disasters that Canada has ever faced? We call on all levels of government to recognize Homelessness as a National Disaster and to respond with immediate short and long term humanitarian relief.



We Believe Homelessness is a Serious Human Rights Violation

The moral and ethical codes of the World's religions, international law, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and federal and provincial human rights legislation, oblige Canadians and Canadian governments to refrain from acts, omissions, or other measures that result in violations of human rights. The very existence of people who do not have any housing is by itself a most serious human rights violation. The most basic human rights of a section of our community are being violated.

We Propose Simple Solutions

We believe the single most important thing needed to end homelessness in Canada is to implement a fully-funded National Housing Program. We propose the **One Percent Solution** to fund such a program. We ask that all levels of government spend 1% of their overall budgets on housing. The One Percent Solution would result in \$2 billion in new funding for social housing annually by the federal government, and \$2 billion in new funding for social housing annually shared among the provincial and territorial governments.

TDRC Steering Committee Members:

John Andras	Co-founder of Project Warmth, Vice-president Research Capital Corp
Cathy Crowe	Street Nurse, Queen West Community Health Centre
Beric German	Housing advocate
Sherrie Golden	Artist and social justice activist
Kathy Hardill	Street Nurse, Regent Park Community Health Centre

Rev. Don (Dan) Heap (Anglican)	Former MP Trinity Spadina
Calvin Henschell	Street Outreach Worker, Regent Park Community Health Centre
David Hulchanski	Professor, University of Toronto
Danielle Koyama	Social justice activist
Steve Lane	Anti-poverty activist
Peter Rosenthal	Lawyer and University of Toronto Professor
Michael Shapcott	National Housing and Homelessness Network co-chair
Frank Showler	Member of Board of St. Claire's Interfaith Housing
David Walsh	President Realco Property Ltd.

Upcoming Events

Starting July 25, 2002 Continuing	The Pope Squat! 1510 King St. West. Toronto. See Details.
Every Tuesday 7-8:30pm	Vigils to turn the Moss Park Armoury into housing for the homeless: Queen and Jarvis st. Toronto. For more info, contact Homes Not Bombs at 416-651-5800.
August 10, 2002 Saturday	Prisoners' Justice Day , in memory of all the people who have died in prison. Riverdale Park (On Broadview, north of Gerrard), 6pm-9pm. For more info contact Rittenhouse at 416-972-9992.
August 13, 2002 Tuesday	Homeless Memorial Vigil, 12 noon , Church of the Holy Trinity, Trinity Square (beside the Eaton's Centre). Toronto
September 5, 2002 Thursday	General Members Meeting, 6:30pm , All Saints Church, southeast corner Sherbourne and Dundas, Toronto. All are welcome!
October 19, 2002 Saturday	Metro Network for Social Justice 2nd Annual Social Justice Activist Award Dinner -- honouring Frank and Isabel Showler. For more info, contact Tanya at 416-598-4521x225.
November 22, 2002 Friday	National Housing Day! Events taking place across the country. For more information, contact TDRC. See Details

Get Involved with TDRC!

Endorse our Declaration -- Homelessness is a National Disaster

You or a group you are part of can endorse our call to have all levels of government declare homelessness a National Disaster and to respond with immediate short and long term humanitarian relief. [Click here to endorse now.](#)

Get on our email list:

To keep informed and updated on housing and homelessness issues, contact us at tdrc@tdrc.net and ask to be put on our email list.

Come to our General Membership Meetings:

Our monthly members meetings are the first Thursday of each month, at 6:30pm at All Saints Church (southeast corner of Dundas and Sherbourne St). Join us as we discuss on-going campaigns, housing news updates, action planning and more! All are welcome.

Attend our Monthly Homeless Memorial Vigils:

We remember all those who have lived on the streets of Toronto and died as a direct result of homelessness the second Tuesday of each month, at 12 noon at the Church of the Holy Trinity (beside the Eaton's Centre). The ceremony is informal and nearly always held outside.

Read our newsletter:

Our newsletter -- "the National Disaster Post" is published roughly four times a year and hand delivered to many organizations and agencies across the city of Toronto. Contact us if you know of an organization in your community that would like to receive copies of our newsletter.

Request a speaker to talk to your group:

We have a variety of possible speakers on our Speakers Bureau who can be requested to give a presentation or workshop on housing and homelessness issues. Contact us for more information.

Donate to TDRC:

We are a small organization with little funding. To support our organizing efforts to end homelessness, please consider making a small donation, whatever you can afford. [Click here to find out how to Donate to TDRC.](#)

Thank you for getting involved with TDRC!

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Site maintained by:
[Steve Werbin](#)

TDRC Action Alert

Open the Armouries Now!

Since the fall of 2001, the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC) has been fighting tirelessly for the opening of a 200 bed shelter to address the current shelter crisis. The shelters are crowded, dangerous and full. TDRC has named the Fort York Armoury as a possible emergency shelter. The City and Federal government’s slow response has caused much suffering and has even led to death of homeless people. The armouries have been used as emergency shelters in the past, without all the roadblocks being put in place now.

Please join our efforts by contacting the key officials responsible for the armouries. Ask them to:

- **Stop stalling;**
- **Recognize Toronto’s Homelessness Disaster; and**
- **Find ways to speed up the process to open the Fort York Armoury as a shelter now!**

Write your letter today!

Hon Art Eggleton Minister for National Defence Major General George Pearkes Bldg North Tower, 13th Floor 101 Colonel By Drive Ottawa, ON K1A 0K2 Phone: 613-996-3100 Fax: 613-995-8189 Eggleton.A@parl.gc.ca	Mayor Mel Lastman 100 Queen St W, 2 nd Floor Toronto, ON M5H 2N2 Telephone: 416-395-6464 Fax: 416-395-6440 mlastman@city.toronto.on.ca
Brad Duguid City of Toronto Councillor (Scarborough) 100 Queen St W, Suite B31 Toronto, ON M5H 2N2	Eric Gam Acting Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services 11 th Floor, Metro Hall

The single most important thing that we can all do to end homelessness in Canada is to implement a **National Housing Strategy**. To fund a national housing strategy the TDRC proposes the **One Percent Solution**.

The amount all levels of government spends on housing is approximately 1% of their overall spending. The **One Percent Solution** calls for all levels of government to allocate one percent of their budgets on housing. This represents an additional \$2 billion annually from the federal government, and \$2 billion combined from the provinces.

This is a simple solution to end our Homeless Disaster

The Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC) asks you and/or your organization to join our national letter-writing campaign, aimed at the Federal Government, putting forth our demand for a fully-funded National Housing Strategy.

In particular, we propose the "One Percent Solution, " which requires that all levels of government spend one percent of their budgets on housing to end the National Disaster of Homelessness. This letter writing campaign will press for future federal budgets to deal with the Homelessness Disaster.

More than 1100 individuals and 400 organizations, including hospitals, numerous health organizations, AIDS services organizations, community services and faith organizations have declared that homelessness is a National Disaster.

The city councils of Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, Nepean and Rideau, and of the regions of Ottawa-Carleton and Durham, and the mayors of 10 of Canada's largest cities, have done the same. The Federal government must respond in an emergency mode!

Your participation in the campaign is needed!

The 1% Solution

In the long term, we must eliminate homelessness. Emergency measures, such as adequate shelters, food, and health care, though imperative now, will not serve forever. We need a permanent National Housing Strategy. Canada holds the unenviable distinction of being the only industrialized country without one.

To fund this historic initiative, the TDRC proposes that all levels of government spend one percent more of their existing total budgets on housing than they now do. This One Percent Solution would be the single largest step towards ending homelessness in this country.

On average, the federal, provincial and municipal governments of Canada spend about one percent of their total budgets on housing; in 1994-95, they spent \$3.83 billion out of a total of \$358 billion. An increase of one percent would hence double the amount now spent and would go far towards ending homelessness in the next three to five years.

Doubling the amount spent would not only substantially increase the number of housing units but would also increase the support services for people who need housing. There would be funding for new construction,

renovation of existing units and subsidies for people on low incomes.

The past three decades have known many housing success stories across the country. We have a wealth of knowledge about how to provide good housing and support services; we lack only the resources to get the job done and end the suffering that homeless people in Canada face in the streets and shelters every day.

The federal government must take the lead. They not only have the largest budget, but would obviously play the key role in a National Housing Strategy.

It's time for all levels of government to take up the One Percent Solution and end the National Disaster of Homelessness.

How To Write Your Letter

Write to your federal Member of Parliament (MP), to your federal Cabinet Ministers, and to the Prime Minister. Tell them you want a National Housing Strategy and the One Percent Solution.

Letter-writing can effectively convince politicians to act; they know that if one person takes the time to write a letter, probably at least 100 other people hold the same opinion. The most effective letters are written in your own words. Here are a few tips:

- 1. Introduce yourself in the first paragraph.** Say why you are concerned about the homeless disaster. If you have a personal connection (a friend, a relative, perhaps even yourself), mention it here.
- 2. Demand that the next federal budget include money for the development of new affordable housing.** Talk about the One Percent Solution. The fact sheet gives some background information.
- 3. The letter need not be long, nor typed or printed;** in fact, handwritten letters have even more effect.
- 4. End by asking the politician to reply, and to speak to colleagues,** the new minister responsible for homelessness, the housing minister, the Finance Minister and the Prime Minister.

You can write one letter to your federal MP and then "cc" the other politicians, or write each separately. If you can, please fax your letters. All letters to the House of Commons go postage-free.

We suggest you write to the following at: - - (Name of Minister), House of Commons, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
- - Hon. Jean Chretien, Prime Minister. **Tell him to address the National Disaster of Homelessness in Canada NOW!** (Fax 613-941-6900)

Your Federal Member of Parliament (MP). Your MP's name is listed in the "Canada" section of your telephone book's blue pages.

Please also "cc" a copy of your letter(s) to us at the TDRC. Thank you!

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An International Call for Solidarity...

On Tuesday, September 24, 2002, Home Depot Canada sent a small army of private security guards backed by a small army of Toronto police to forcibly evict about 125 people from a homeless encampment on their unused property in downtown Toronto, Canada. Home Depot needs to be held in account for its actions. Due to the urgency and seriousness of this matter, please respond immediately to our international call for solidarity and action against Home Depot.

Home Depot needs to be held in account for its terrible actions against Tent City on September 24. Organize an information picket of a Home Depot store in your community. See below for more information to help you. Also, get the report on the [first information picket of the Home Depot Canada head office and store!](#)

The HomeLess Depot Campaign Action Pack:

- [1. Background guide \(includes info on the key demands and what you can do\)](#)
- [2. A tip sheet on how to organize your own information picket of a Home Depot store.](#)
- [3. Sample text for flyer that can be distributed at your information picket.](#)

Any questions, don't hesitate to give us a call at 416-599-8372 or email tdrc@tdrc.net. Thanks.

Toronto Disaster Relief Committee

More information on the Tent City Eviction:

- [Tent City eviction photo gallery!](#)
- Police Army Demolishes Tent City -- Report and Photos by Gary Morton
<http://CitizensontheWeb.com>
- [TDRC on the City's Housing Deal](#) - Sept 27, 2002
- [Libby Davies on Tent City](#) - Sept 26, 2002
- [Buzz Hargrove on Tent City](#) - Sept 25, 2002
- [Howard Hampton on Tent City](#) - Sept 25, 2002
- [Jack Layton on Tent City](#) - Sept 24, 2002
- [The City of Toronto on Tent City](#) - Sept 24, 2002
- [Home Depot on Tent City](#) - Sept 24, 2002



- [Homes First on Tent City](#) - Sept 24, 2002
- [Dalton McGuinty on Tent City](#) - Sept 24, 2002



Shelter From the Storm

A New Film by Michael Connolly

55 minutes. 2001. VHS. Produced by Brink Inc. in association with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

The number of homeless people has increased dramatically since the mid-1990s. What can advocates for homeless people do to change anything? This cinéma vérité documentary follows the behind-the-scenes activity of TDRC in their effort to pressure governments to end homelessness.

In Shelter From the Storm, TDRC works with residents of Canada's most famous squatter encampment Tent City to prevent their eviction. The residents have squatted on unused and polluted land on Toronto's waterfront. The owner of the land Home Depot, the City of Toronto and the provincial Ministry of the Environment want Tent City off. Residents and TDRC push City Council to provide land and new housing.

For more information on the film, how to obtain a copy of the video, or to request a TDRC and/or Tent City speaker for your presentation of the film to your group, contact TDRC at 416-599-8372 or tdrc@tdrc.net.

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get ready for the 3nd Annual



National Housing Day

Friday, November 22nd 2002

It has been four years since the Big City Mayors' Caucus of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, cities and regions, and community advocates everywhere declared Homelessness a National Disaster.

Last November 2001, the federal, territorial and provincial housing ministers finally signed a housing agreement in Quebec City. Since then most of the provinces have failed to meet the commitments they made and the federal government, bogged down in negotiating bilateral deals, has not moved beyond the modest "first step" of the agreement.

On National Housing Day we will reissue our call for a fully-funded National Housing Programme through the One Percent Solution (The One Percent Solutions calls on the federal government to commit \$2 billion dollars annually for new social housing, with matching funds from the provinces combined.)

Last year, the mayors of Vancouver, Edmonton, Saskatoon, North Bay, Parry Sound, Toronto, Ottawa and Halifax issued official proclamations backing National Housing Day and 21 communities across the country participated. Here are some highlights of that day:

- **Vancouver:** Life-size puppets, music and speakers at a site of a proposed housing co-op.
- **Edmonton:** An outdoor vigil at a parking lot to highlight the conditions facing the estimated 1,200 homeless people on that city's streets.
- **Parry Sound:** A community walk through the streets, followed by a community meal.
- **Toronto:** A homeless memorial, community meal and community rally at City Hall, with music, speakers and the building of a symbolic house.
- **Kingston:** Cardboard construct of "Kingston's affordable housing" displayed opposite city hall.
- **Ottawa:** A forum with local and national politicians, with a photo exhibit on homelessness.
- **Halifax:** Rally and forum featuring Shining Lights Choir, which includes people who have experienced homelessness. Thirty boxes decorated to represent "their idea of home".

Get Involved!

- 1 Celebrate National Housing Day!** Make sure your group or community participates in this historic day! Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to join others across the country call for a fully-funded national housing program. Start organizing today.
- 2 Start a "November 22 Action Group"** Call on housing and homelessness groups, tenants' organizations, unions, local district labour council, local politicians, and social justice and faith groups. Create useful partnerships. Last year the Toronto event was sponsored by the City of Toronto, the City's Advisory Committee on Homeless and Socially Isolated Persons, the National Housing and Homelessness Network and the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee.
- 3 Identify one or two good ideas for the day:** Look at last year's examples for ideas (vigil, forum, community meal, march, rally, puppetry, building of symbolic houses, photo-exhibit, music). Other ideas include a community screening of Shelter From the Storm--the documentary on Toronto's Tent City, hanging a "Housing for All" banner in a prominent place in your community, release a "one year later" report card on the housing agreement, street theatre, a play...
- 4 Order a "Housing for All" banner:** Let us know if you are interested in ordering a large (30 x 4 feet) professional quality banner with the statement "Housing for All" at a cost of \$190. This banner may be displayed at a prominent location in your community. In Toronto, a "Housing For All" banner is displayed on a co-op building and is visible from a main highway coming downtown.
- 5 Spread the Word:** Use the day to help build awareness on housing and homelessness issues. Prepare a flyer. Contact local media well in advance of the event. Let them know what you are doing and why you are doing it. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper or encourage a prominent person in your community to write an op-ed piece to be included in the paper the day before your event.
- 6 Ask your Mayor to Proclaim the Day:** In many municipalities the mayor can issue proclamations to mark special days. Call your mayor and ask that November 22 be named as "National Housing Day".
- 7 Keep in touch with us:** NHHN can help by providing action ideas, sample flyer, press release and proclamation, background information, 1% Solution buttons, or other support you may need. We will also include your community's participation in our national media work.

Start Organizing Today. Be creative and have fun!

Sample Proclamation

(Last Year's Proclamation issued by the City of Ottawa)

National Housing Strategy Day
November 22, 2001

WHEREAS, the City of Ottawa, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and other organizations across the nation have recognized that homelessness is a national disaster and called on the Federal government to develop and implement a national housing strategy; and

WHEREAS, the City of Ottawa has proposed that the federal Housing program include the statement that the program must be designed to produce units for those households in the lowest 20 percent income bracket; and

WHEREAS, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities is advocating for a National Housing Strategy, and as an influential member of the FCM, the City of Ottawa endorses and supports a National Housing Strategy; and

THEREFORE, I, Bob Chiarelli, Mayor of the City of Ottawa, do hereby proclaim **November 22, 2001 as National Housing Strategy Day** in Ottawa.

***Journée de la stratégie nationale du logement
le 22 novembre 2001***

ATTENDU QUE la Ville d'Ottawa, la Fédération canadienne des municipalités (FCM) et d'autres organismes de tous les coins du pays ont reconnu que le phénomène des sans-abri constitue une catastrophe nationale et ont demandé au gouvernement fédéral d'élaborer et de mettre en oeuvre une stratégie nationale du logement;

ATTENDU QUE la Ville d'Ottawa a proposé que le programme fédéral de logement englobe l'énoncé stipulant que ledit programme doit prévoir la construction de logements pour les ménages se trouvant parmi les 20 p. 100 les moins nantis;

ATTENDU QUE la Fédération canadienne des municipalités préconise une stratégie nationale du logement et qu'à titre de membre influent de la FCM, la Ville d'Ottawa appuie une telle stratégie;

IL EST RÉSOLU QUE, je, Bob Chiarelli, maire de la Ville d'Ottawa, proclame par la présente le **22 novembre 2001 Journée de la stratégie nationale du logement** à Ottawa.

Bob Chiarelli
Mayor / Maire

For more information, contact TDRC (the secretariat for the National Housing and Homelessness Network) at 416-599-8372 or email tdrc@tdrc.net

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October 1998

Proposal for Emergency Relief Strategy for the City of Toronto

Relief Efforts for Toronto

Aims:

- To provide immediate respite and safety for homeless people
- To prevent further threats to homeless people's physical and mental health

A. TEMPORARY, EMERGENCY RELIEF MEASURES

The following measures should be instituted immediately. These measures must be temporary; that is, used for as short a period as possible. People using these emergency resources ultimately must be provided with appropriate, safe, permanent living situations.

Large Shelters.....

Moss Park Armoury should be opened as an emergency 24-hour-a-day facility to handle the overflow from existing emergency shelter services. Similar facilities should be opened in other areas in the city.

Ø Rationale. In 1996, during 'Operation Cold Snap', the military opened Moss Park Armoury as an emergency "warming facility". This operation, triggered by the deaths of several single homeless men, was intended to prevent further harm to individuals. It succeeded as an emergency measure. The facility was well-used, by close to 200 people. Homeless people and advocates alike considered it safe and clean and adequately staffed by cadets, volunteers, public health nurses and mental health workers. Similar facilities would serve the same purpose.

Smaller Specialized Shelters.....

Other public buildings (or buildings on short-term municipal leases) should be made available for shelter. In particular, resources should be allocated to meet the special needs of families, women and children, youth, aboriginal people, people with an immuno-deficiency or chronic illness such as HIV/AIDs, and people with addictions. Some specialized facilities will require proper ventilation to protect immune-compromised people from airborne diseases.

Ø Rationale. Research and inquest recommendations point to the need for smaller shelters.

Public Parks....

Several parks should be designated as places of refuge. Security, portable toilets, bath houses, emergency health services, emergency shelter (mobile homes, rail cars, trailers, tents) must be provided.

Ø Rationale. Homeless people are currently forced to dwell in parks, and probably will continue to use park space until adequate housing is built.

Providing functional shelter in the parks, with access to health services, water, bathing facilities and toilets, is humane and healthy public policy.

Unused railcars, mobile homes, and army tents are readily accessible.

Emergency Health Care.....

Emergency health relief efforts should include the following:

- outreach health care services at all existing and new emergency sites by health care workers who are trusted and respectful of people's special needs
- a hospital discharge protocol that ensures that homeless people requiring recuperation, convalescence, medication, treatments etc. are not discharged "to the street"
- immediate opening of an emergency infirmary to allow individuals with illnesses such as tuberculosis, bronchitis, flu, pneumonia, skin infections, uncontrolled diabetes, etc. to recuperate in a safe, supervised fashion
- immediate opening of additional detox facilities, including one culturally sensitive to aboriginal people
- infection and disease control programs, including immunization programs and tuberculosis screening, bathing facilities, waste management (i.e., adequate toilets/portable toilets), safe food handling, adequate ventilation
- supplementary feeding and vitamin programs
- health strategies that especially treat the relationship between homelessness and severe infectious or communicable diseases, such as HIV/AIDs, tuberculosis and hepatitis. Strategies for prevention and care for those who are already infected must be developed immediately (harm reduction, special facilities and care for people with HIV/AIDs, tuberculosis, etc.)

Ø Rationale. The burden of illness and death is exacerbated by crowding, stress, hunger, lack of basic facilities for hygiene, inadequate health care and dismantled health programs. Services must be reconstructed to include preventive, curative and primary care.

Support: Faith Groups, Local Charity Resources, and Non-Governmental Organizations.....

Governments must provide funding to enable these organizations to provide adequate staffing, nutritional food, personal hygiene supplies, clothing, bedding, indoor and outdoor space for homeless people during this emergency period.

Ø Rationale. These groups have been instrumental in responding to the early stages of the homeless disaster by providing space in their facilities, collection of sleeping bags, food and clothing, etc. However, their resources are depleted and their volunteers over worked, leaving them unable to respond to the floods of homeless people requiring their service. As a result, their space remains empty for most of the year. Their interest and commitment should be supported by government funding so they can continue their valuable contribution.

Suspend and Reassess Discriminatory Municipal Bylaws.....

Bylaws that limit the location of housing and services for the poor, and that prevent homeowners creating and maintaining adequate rental apartments, should be suspended.

Ø Rationale. Present bylaws covertly attempt to 'people zone' rather than zone land uses. For years, some homeowners were prepared to renovate for rental purposes but were prevented by restrictive bylaws. Some renovations could bring new housing on-stream (eg., basement apartments, backyard buildings).

Reopen and Keep Open Services....

Several services assisting the homeless have been closed, or are classified as temporary and hence due to

close, or are precarious due to insecure funding. There must be a moratorium on any loss of services until the emergency is over.

Ø Rationale. Closures literally dump significant numbers of homeless people into a shelter system that has no capacity remaining. It is one of the most harmful practices that can be enacted on to a vulnerable population.

Reinstate the 21.6% to Social Assistance Benefits.....

The reinstatement of the 21.6% is the most important preventative measure with respect to homelessness.

Ø Rationale. There is no question that removing one fifth of the money impoverished households receive each month (introduced in October 1996) has resulted in some becoming homeless and has placed many more at immediate risk of becoming homeless and remaining homeless. The most recent study of welfare rates in Canada found that most people living on welfare were even poorer in 1996 than the people living on welfare in 1986. The report by the National Council of Welfare notes that the depth of their poverty is getting worse because benefits do not keep up with the cost of living and because benefit levels in all provinces are well below the poverty line.

Public Information Campaign....

A public information campaign to explain the nature of the crisis of homelessness is needed. The campaign would also address basic human rights issues such as discrimination towards people on social assistance, people of colour, people with HIV/AIDs, people with substance issues and drug issues.

Ø Rationale. Negative stereotypes, hate-mongering and misinformation are harmful and work to prevent solutions. A public campaign, local and national is needed to better inform the public about the nature of the crisis and the short and long term risks to the men, women and children who are homeless in our communities.

Legal Strategy.....

Human Rights legislation must be enforced and tenant legal protection must be increased.

Ø Rationale. Reports of discrimination in housing are on the increase as are evictions. It is presently very difficult for people who are poor to obtain legal representation.

B. IMMEDIATE LONG TERM: The 1 Percent Solution

We call on all levels of government to increase their collective spending on housing by 1 percent of their total budgets.

Ø Rationale. Current housing expenditures of the federal, provincial and local governments as a percentage of all budget expenditures, average about 1 percent (approximately \$3.8 billion). From the late 1940s to the mid-1990s, the federal and provincial governments provided about 600,000 social housing units. The annual cost of this housing, together with all other housing programs delivered by any level of government in Canada, is about 1 % of the combined federal, provincial, territorial and local government budget expenditures (1994/95 fiscal year, Statistics Canada, CANSIM). The federal government spends about 1.2% of its budget on housing, as does the Province of Ontario. Local governments spend a little less than one percent of their budgets on housing (0.9%). Lack of government intervention leads to higher housing prices for all Canadians, pushes up the costs of existing housing and land and reduces housing starts, thereby

increasing the numbers of people made homeless.

For people living in poverty, the threat of homelessness is real. The Toronto Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness recently reported that more than 80,000 people in Toronto are at risk of becoming homeless. For homeless people, long-term shelter living is not sustainable, leading to serious illness, risk of TB, HIV/AIDs, depression, deprivation of civil rights and deterioration of the human spirit.

Annual Federal housing expenditures from 1991 to 1996 were approximately 1 percent or \$2 billion. This year the Federal government is devoting \$9.7 billion dollars to military expenditures (Project Ploughshares). Such skewed national funding priorities are turning more Canadian residents into homeless refugees. Devoting an additional 1 percent of overall spending to housing would be the single largest step towards eliminating homelessness. Governments must implement the 1 percent solution on behalf of all Canadians; delay will lead to even more injuries and death.

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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WHERE'S THE HOUSING?

Please find below a report from the May 14, 2002 "Where's the Housing?" rally and homeless memorial vigil -- a great success despite the wet and cold weather. You'll also find the report card on the housing agreements, as well as an action alert to contact Ernie Eves today.

RALLY : Due to the weather and concerns for the homeless people in attendance without a change of clothes, the rally/memorial was held inside the Church of the Holy Trinity. There was about 100 people in attendance. Speakers included Michael Shapcott of the National Housing and Homelessness Network, Jack Layton of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Frances Sanderson of the Housing and Homelessness Network in Ontario and Anishnawbe Homes and Rainer "DRI" Driemeyer of Tent City. This was one of many events taking place across the country for National Week of Action on Housing -- all calling our governments to adopt the 1% Solution -- that all levels of government commit 1% of their budgets on housing -- more specifically, \$2 billion in new funding for social housing annually by the federal government, and \$2 billion in new funding for social housing annually shared among the provincial and territorial governments.

MEMORIAL: For the memorial, we remembered all those who have lived on the streets on Toronto, and died as a direct result of homelessness -- that included two homeless deaths since last month's memorial, and 10 homeless deaths in the past that had been missing from our list. The total number of names on our list of homeless deaths in Toronto is now at 258. 14 of those have died since the Housing Agreement was signed in Quebec City in November 2001!

HOMELESSNESS PHOTO DISPLAY:

After the rally/memorial, we visited the homelessness photo exhibit by photographer Christopher Bognat of the Canadian Auto Workers Union Local 112. The exhibit is on display at City Hall main floor until Friday May 17, 2002. Make sure to see it -- it's very good.

REPORT CARD:

At the event, a report card was released revealing the failed promises and betrayed commitments of the provincial and federal governments. Below is a quick synopsis of the report card.

Government	Grade	Comment
Federal Government	D-	7% of 1% -- A promising start but not good enough!
Quebec	A	Shows great leadership! Well done!
British Columbia	F	A disastrous response to a national disaster
Alberta	F	Incomplete assignment: housing cuts indicate failed promise
Saskatchewan	F	Incomplete assignment - housing cuts indicate failed promise
Manitoba	F	Incomplete assignment- housing cuts indicate failed promise
Ontario	F	Incomplete assignment - shows poor math skills - need to "match" fed dollars
New Brunswick	F	Incomplete assignment - no housing cuts but inadequate response

PEI	F	Incomplete assignment - housing cuts indicate failed promise
Nova Scotia	F	Incomplete assignment - housing cuts indicate failed promise
Newfoundland	F	Incomplete assignment - increased housing spending but inadequate response

Don't miss the [full National Housing and Homelessness Network report card](#).

[Our demand for the One Percent Solution -- More Affordable than Ever!!](#)

YOUR ACTION NEEDED:

Six months ago, Ontario said it would help fund new affordable housing. . .

In November of 2001, Ontario housing minister Chris Hodgson joined with the federal government and every other province in signing the Affordable Housing Framework Agreement. Under this deal, Ontario has promised to move "as quickly as possible" to provide funds to build affordable housing for low and moderate income renter households. Ontario also agreed to match the \$245 million that the federal government will pay for desperately needed new housing in Ontario.

Six months later, Ontario has only agreed to spend \$20 million - that's about 7% of what it agreed to under the November housing deal. And Ontario wants to divert the funds to expensive private sector rental units, instead of affordable housing for the people who need it the most.

It's time to raise your voice: Phone, fax or write Premier Ernie Eves. Tell him that you want Ontario to honour the commitment it made in Quebec City and spend \$245 million in new provincial funds for affordable housing in Ontario. And tell him that you want the money to go for housing that is truly affordable to low and moderate income households.

Call or write today!

Premier Ernie Eves - phone: 416-325-1941, fax: 416-325-7578

Email: webprem@gov.on.ca

Address: Legislative Bldg, Queen's Park, Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

If possible, please send us a copy of your communication. Thank you.

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TDRC Media Releases

January 14, 2002

For Immediate Release

Mayor Mel meets with Hell's Angels while refusing organization that declared Homelessness a National Disaster

With over 17 requests for a meeting with Mayor Mel Lastman rejected or ignored, street nurse Cathy Crowe is angry and frustrated as to why the Mayor can so quickly meet with the Hell's Angels and not her group – the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee. Despite a recent verbal promise by the Mayor to Ms. Crowe to meet with 3-4 delegates from TDRC, the Mayor's office issued a refusal as recently as January 7, 2002. In a January 7, 2002 letter to Ms. Crowe from Alan Slobodsky, the Mayor's Chief of Staff "...the Mayor's schedule is very busy...". This now counts as the 18th refusal by the Mayor to meet with TDRC.

"We have written, we have visited his office, I have spoken to his staff numerous times (17) requesting a one hour meeting – just for myself and 3 other Board members of Toronto Disaster Relief Committee – a nurse, an outreach worker, a professor and a lawyer. We are experts on the crisis of homelessness and have asked since October 1998 to brief him on the issues. Why won't the most senior elected official in this city meet with a group of people concerned about the homelessness crisis?" asks Ms. Crowe.

TDRC declared homelessness a national disaster in October of 1998 and was instrumental in forming the National Housing and Homelessness Network, campaigning both locally and across the country for the 1% solution. TDRC has exposed to the United Nations, Canada's poor track record on homelessness, and furthermore, on the local scene the fact that many shelters do not meet the UN Standard for refugee camps, that we now face a TB micro-epidemic and an unacceptable number of homeless deaths.

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@web.net

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TDRC Media Releases

January 15, 2002

For Immediate Release

**Emergency Action
Shelters are Full
Open the Armouries Now!**

Wednesday, January 16, 2002, 12 noon
Fort York Armoury, 660 Fleet St W, west of Bathurst
(near the Princess Gate entrance to the Exhibition Grounds.)

The Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC) has identified a number of emergency shelter sites, including the armouries and Princess Margaret Hospital. It's very cold already and people are dying. A shelter must be opened immediately otherwise there will be more deaths. Homeless people, the TDRC and their supporters will converge on the Fort York Armoury with their simple message of the shelters are crowded and full, save lives and open up this federal building which has been used for this purpose before.

This action is happening at the same time as proposals to cut funding to shelters and lay off workers are proceeding to City Council. Also, while the mayor glad-hands with the Hell's Angels, the mayor's office has contacted a co-founder of the TDRC, Cathy Crowe, to tell her that she won't be able to get a meeting with the mayor to inform him of the shelter crisis.

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@web.net

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January 30, 2002

For Immediate Release

Preparing a Death Sentence for Homeless People!

Under the heading “It’s Shelter Bedlam (Tuesday, January, 29th, 2002) Sue-Ann Levy of the Toronto Sun wrote a scathing attack on homeless people. In her column she writes that the city’s budget committee vice-chairman Paul Sutherland thinks there should be a moratorium on the “creation of any and all new shelters for the city’s homeless.”

“Now we know where many of the city’s homeless problems come from,” says Musonda Kidd of the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC). Social service agencies, advocates and the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC) have been saying all winter that beds should be opened immediately. We’ve seen too many homeless people die. Two died in crowded shelters from tuberculosis. This should have been a wake up call. Instead we have a journalist and a councillor spewing hatred against the most vulnerable.”

Levy writes that Sutherland has suggested that “before one more dollar is spent on shelter beds” Mel Lastman should create a task force to review whether there are better ways to serve the homeless.

“Taskforce!! I’ve stacks of recommendations from various task forces -- they won’t shelter homeless people this winter,” says Cathy Crowe, a street nurse and member of the TDRC. “The TDRC has proposed a plan to house people in long term affordable housing. The creation of transitional housing and emergency shelters are needed while permanent housing is being built. Any plans to cut shelter expenses would bring about catastrophic results. Don’t these people know that there is an urgent need right now – we’re in a recession, thousands are being evicted. We are the richest city in Canada. We are required to house and shelter people.”

TDRC will be sending a letter to Councillor Sutherland requesting an emergency meeting with him to remedy this matter now.

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@web.net

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TDRC Media Releases

February 21, 2002

For Immediate Release

Most Desperate Situation for Homeless People in Toronto's History

Friday February 22, 2002 , 9 am to 11 am

Homeless Advisory Committee

City Hall in Council Chambers

At this meeting of the City's Homeless Advisory Committee, the **only item** on the agenda is the **emergency** around shelter beds. We know that front line workers and homeless people are desperate. 1000-1500 men and women are forced to sleep outside. Normally by this time of year we have had some respite with the opening of **at least one** emergency shelter. Homeless people are cold, wet, damp and sick. Many have died. Tuberculosis has entered the shelter system with a vengeance. The city has done nothing to bring some of the city's shelters up to UN Standards for Refugee Camps.

We expect many homeless people and many workers to attend this meeting. We have asked the Mayor to send one of his staff to this meeting to hear the concerns. We will be making recommendations and begging for help.

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@web.net

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March 12, 2002

For Immediate Release

Breaking the Homeless Logjam Starts with Eric Gam

The Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC) and Toronto's Homeless Advisory Committee have long wondered who is responsible for the present hostel crisis. "We now know where the problem lies," says Musonda Kidd of the TDRC after a short meeting with the Acting Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services, Eric Gam. This revelation comes on the heels of the Advisory Committee calling for a two hundred bed hostel to be opened immediately; Toronto City Council passing a motion that the Federal government make it clear that they would allow the armouries to be opened if requested; and Tony Ianno, a Federal MP declaring that if requested the armouries would be made available.

"At our meeting with the powerful commissioner, he stated clearly that he would not recommend any emergency shelter be made available. Further he stated that hostel services had things under control," says Beric German, TDRC co-founder.

In the same period as Jim Flaherty calls for homeless people to be arrested, a City official makes it abundantly clear that homeless people will be left on the streets until permanent shelter can be constructed. This crucial stance is being taken with the full knowledge of the present crisis and the fact that the Out of the Cold program will be winding down at the end of March removing 180 beds from the system.

The TDRC will be organizing an action to expose the logjam that Eric Gam has helped to create on the same day as people gather to mourn the ever increasing deaths and suffering of homeless people. People at the Homeless Vigil will be joining the action to "Break the Gam Logjam."

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@web.net

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March 13, 2002

For Immediate Release

The Life and Death Argument

On Tuesday March 12, members of the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee occupied the office of Eric Gam, Acting Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services. Mr. Gam is the senior bureaucrat responsible for life saving shelter services in the city.

Today, a 2 hour meeting was held with Mr. Gam. The Mayor's Chief of Staff, who had agreed to attend, cancelled at the last moment. TDRC reps included front line workers Cathy Crowe (Queen West CHC), Beric German (Street Health), Bob Rose (PARC), Howard Watson from Canadian Pensioners Concerned, Steve Watson from the national office of Canadian Auto Workers, Eldon Comfort a World War II vet and Judy Velland from an Out of the Cold programme.

Mr. Gam was briefed on the nature of the crisis, including the number of people forced to sleep outside, the number of deaths, the tuberculosis micro-epidemic, the unsanitary and unsafe shelter conditions and the overall despair among homeless people and front line workers with the lack of city will to utilize the federal armouries for shelter.

On March 27, Community and Neighbourhood Services Committee will discuss a motion requesting city staff proceed with asking the federal government for use of the armouries.

Today, TDRC demanded that Mr. Gam report by March 20, in writing to TDRC, on how he will brief and inform the above City Committee, how he will proceed with opening 200 more emergency shelter beds including either the utilization of the armoury or Metro Hall. In particular TDRC reminded Mr. Gam of his responsibility to consider the issue as a life and death matter and act accordingly.

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@web.net

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TDRC Media Releases

March 26, 2002

For Immediate Release

Enough is Enough Open 200 Bed Shelter Now!

Since October 2001, the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee has been fighting tirelessly for the IMMEDIATE opening of a 200 bed shelter to deal with the current shelter crisis. The City's response, or lack of, is causing much suffering and has even led to death of homeless people. Just one week ago a homeless woman burned to death on TEDCO land near the waterfront. It is unlikely that she would have accessed the present shelter system. How the City and other levels of government respond to the Homeless Disaster has become a national tragedy and a national embarrassment.

TDRC has suggested the use of the Fort York Armoury as a temporary emergency shelter until longer term solutions are found. The armouries have been used as emergency shelters in the past. However, back and forth finger-pointing between the City and the Fed has stalled the matter. It is now clearly evident that the ball is in the City's court. The federal Minister of Defence Art Eggleton indicates that the City must request the use of the Armouries and that the Armouries have been used for such a purpose in the past.

On Wednesday March 27, at Community Services Committee meeting, TDRC hopes for a final resolution on the matter. TDRC spokespeople will be available for comments at 10am, on Wednesday, in front of Committee Room 1, City Hall.

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@web.net

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March 27, 2002

For Immediate Release

City Commissioner Instructed to “Get on the Phone” to Ask for the Armouries as a Shelter!

At today’s Community Services Committee meeting, City Councillors unanimously voted in favour to call for the use of the Fort York Armoury as a shelter. The Acting Commissioner of Community Neighbourhood Services, Eric Gam was instructed by Councillors to immediately “get on the phone” to the appropriate federal authorities to ask that they allow the Fort York Armoury to be used on an emergency or ongoing basis for emergency shelter.

Since the fall of 2001, the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee has been fighting tirelessly for the opening of a 200 bed shelter to deal with the current shelter crisis. The City’s slow response has caused much suffering and has even led to death of homeless people. Just one week ago a homeless woman burned to death on TEDCO land near the waterfront. It is unlikely that she would have accessed the present shelter system.

The decision today by City Councillors to request the use of the Fort York Armoury as a shelter, as has been done in the past, comes as welcome news to the TDRC and supporters. Now all wait for the response from the Federal government on when the Armoury doors will open.

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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May 17, 2002

For Immediate Release

Public Release of Shocking Video!

“If a picture says a thousand words, this video says many thousands, and it clearly says open the armouries. After all, the land the Fort York Armoury sits on was leased by the City of Toronto to the federal government for only \$1 for 100 years. We need its use now more than ever before.”-- Cathy Crowe, Street Nurse and co-founder of Toronto Disaster Relief Committee

Media Conference: Tuesday May 21, 2002, 10am, City Hall, Committee Room #3.

There will be a media conference and a public showing of a shocking secret video taken in a homeless shelter. The minute long footage shows clear human rights violations. It exhibits how people are at risk of communicable diseases such as TB and infestations like scabies and lice and stress leading to mental health breakdown. Copies of the video will be available to television stations, and stills will be available for newspapers. Community leaders will speak at the public showing and press conference. The event will precede a City Council resolution regarding the opening of the armouries.

Responses to the Video:

Dr. Stephen Hwang, Population Health Epidemiologist, St. Michael's Hospital: “clearly a risk to the health of the individuals forced to live in this situation, and creates conditions that pose a public health risk through the spread of TB and other infectious diseases.”

Dennis Raphael, PhD, Associate Professor of Health Policy and Management, York University: “this situation is an affront to the dignity of those who are forced to live in these situations but also to all Torontonians who value human rights and well-being.”

The Most Rev TE Finlay, Archbishop of Toronto: “Canada needs a national housing strategy. And, until that is in place, shelters must be more available, safer, cleaner and more respecting of those who need them.”

Dominic Agostino, MPP, Liberal Housing Critic: “The conditions depicted on the video looked more like a refugee camp than what should be found in the City of Toronto in the year 2002.”

Michael Prue, MPP, NDP Housing Critic: “this film portrays a wake-up call to everyone in our society”.

Sara Boyles, Rector, Church of the Holy Trinity: “To know similar things happen in our city - on our streets and in our shelters is one thing. To see them in a video is appalling.”

John Andras, Vice President, The Rotary Club of Toronto and Vice President, Research Capital. “I was reminded of pictures showing the lower decks of slave ships.”

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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June 19, 2002

For Immediate Release

What has been the Response to the Release of the Homeless Secret Video?



The sign says it all. This is a graphic of an actual photograph of the door of a shelter taken June 13th (last week) one day before it closed for renovations and 80 more people were denied shelter.

Press Conference: Thursday June 20, 9:30am
Outside City Hall, just below Mel Lastman's Office.

Community leaders and homeless people will be speaking out as 80 more homeless people are driven into the streets, alleys, ravines and Tent City.

On May 21, the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC) released a secret video which showed the deplorable conditions in one of Toronto's shelters. It became a front page story in the Toronto Star and was reported on in all local and national media. One woman began to cry after viewing the video while being interviewed by CityTV. "It is fair to say that our country was shocked and appalled," says Cathy Crowe of the TDRC.

What was the result? Mayor Lastman, Premier Eves, and Community, Family and Children's Services Minister Elliot, were questioned and all admitted that things like this shouldn't be happening in Toronto. City Council called on the Federal government to open the armouries to shelter homeless people.

Did shelters open? No, but another shelter closed on June 14th, driving another 80 people into the streets just in time for the weekend rain.

Erdine Hope from the Toronto Friendship Centre (TFC), one of the city's largest day shelters has had to pick up some of the pieces. She says, "when they (homeless people denied shelter) come to the TFC in the early morning, they are angry and it is often difficult to manage. We can't keep up with the medical, physical and shelter needs. An overnight facility has to be opened." Fellow TFC worker LaTania Wilson summarizes "why are the most vulnerable being denied?"

The press conference attendants will join with TDRC when they deliver a letter to Mel Lastman's office.

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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July 28, 2002

For Immediate Release

**Heat Alert Called
Vulnerable people told to go to shopping malls.
No Cooling Centres opened.**

As of 8 pm tonight the City of Toronto had only **called a Heat Alert**. This means that warnings such as the above are issued but NO Cooling Centres are opened for homeless people or other people vulnerable to heat injury, such as people on psychiatric medications. Cooling centers are only opened when the City increases the alert to a **Heat Emergency**. When will that happen? Today's heat was recorded to equate to mid 40 degrees with the humidity (Weather Channel).

City officials saw fit to issue a press release on July 26 warning Pilgrims of the potentially hot weekend and in fact numerous heat emergencies were treated at Downsview Park today.

As Cathy Crowe, street nurse says: "It's too bad the city doesn't care quite so much for their own citizens. Imagine the City issuing a warning like they did to the Pilgrims that urged them to carry at least 1.5 litres of water with them and to reassure them that there would be an unprecedented level of medical coverage should they become ill. Tonight I learned that the Red Cross had one paramedic prepared to respond. The only cooling place they could tell people to go to was a shopping centre."

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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August 27, 2002

For Immediate Release

“We will not be moved...”

Until there is housing”

Tent City under Duress -- Threats of eviction, police harassment and lack of basic health standards

Rally and Press Conference
10am, Wednesday August 28, 2002

Tent City -- south of Lakeshore Boulevard, between Cherry & Parliament St.

Tent City, the village that Canada's homeless disaster built is being threatened with evictions, police harassment and inadequate facilities. Police entered Tent City last week, ostensibly to investigate the “stealing of electricity.” Police entered homes saying they “did not need a search warrant”. When a resident protested and his dog barked at them, witnesses heard police threaten to kill the dog.

Police spoke to Beric German of the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC) and separately to a Tent City resident and said “soon people will be out of here”. The reality is that Tent City residents need more aid including electricity, toilets, and food. They need the simple necessities for the site to meet international refugee camp standards and to fulfill basic public health criteria. As one resident put it, referring to police actions and lack of health standards, “we are not animals.”

It has been over one year since the City agreed to a plan to house Tent City residents. No land has materialized to fulfill that task. In the meantime, there have been hostel closings, and numerous police sweeps of homeless people from parks and alleys, even during the Pope's visit. The result has been that Tent City has swelled to over 100 people. Not incidentally, the village of Tent City is saving the hostel system at least \$100,000 a month and a million dollars a year. This would be a substantial down-payment to house all the people on a new site.

Tent City residents and supporters will gather on Wednesday August 28, at 10am to speak out about these matters. They will also sing a resounding old and appropriate song **“We shall not be moved.”**

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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September 9, 2002

For Immediate Release

Stop the Terror of Homelessness

-- Four More Deaths --

Tuesday September 10, 2002, 12 noon

Homeless Memorial Vigil

Church of the Holy Trinity outside steps

(Beside the Eaton Centre)

While we mourn the deaths of the victims of September 11, the homeless death toll mounts with little attention being paid to it. The homeless are no more responsible for their demise than those killed by planes.

It seems that the September 11 attack is being used to escalate what could be a terrible war, where many more women, children, and men will die. Reflecting on the untimely deaths of homeless people might lead to another kind of war – a war against homelessness and the saving of many lives.

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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For immediate release
September 30, 2002

Throne Speech 2002:

Time to start building new housing!

“We can start building the housing and services tomorrow, if the federal government would make the commitment today”

With winter fast approaching, the federal government needs to quickly turn its promises in today's Throne Speech for more affordable housing and more money for homeless services into a fully-funded national housing program. “We can start building the housing and providing the services tomorrow, if the federal government would only make the commitment today,” says **Michael Shapcott**, co-chair of the National Housing and Homelessness Network. In today's speech, the federal government has promised to increase its commitment to desperately needed new affordable housing and to extend the Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative (SCPI), the federal homelessness strategy that was announced in 1999 and due to expire this year.

In November of 2001, the federal government promised to spend \$680 million over five years on affordable housing. The National Housing and Homelessness Network says spending should be ramped up to \$2 billion annually for a comprehensive national housing program. The NHHN plan, called the One Percent Solution, would fund 25,000 new social housing units annually, and would also provide increased funds for rehabilitation of substandard housing, rent supplements for low-income households, supportive housing and shelter and services for the homeless.

“Community-based housing providers and groups that work with the homeless in every part of Canada are overwhelmed with the huge and growing housing crisis and homelessness disaster,” says Shapcott. “We're glad that the federal government has recognized the need for action in today's Throne Speech, but there should be no delay in flowing the funding. Housing projects and services are ready to go. The Throne Speech recognizes that Aboriginal people living in cities are bearing a big burden when it comes to housing and homelessness. Aboriginal housing providers already manage more than 10,000 housing units across the country. New housing for Aboriginals needs to be owned and managed by Aboriginal groups.”

Here are the specific words from today's federal Throne Speech on housing and homelessness:

"[The government] will extend its investments in affordable housing for those whose needs are greatest, particularly in those Canadians cities where the problem is most acute. It will extend the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative to provide communities with the tools to plan and implement local strategies to help reduce homelessness. In a number of cities, poverty is disproportionately concentrated among Aboriginal people. The government will work with interested provinces to expand on existing pilot programs to meet the needs of Aboriginal people living in cities."

This is the most lengthy reference to housing and homelessness in any recent Throne Speech.

October 1, 2002

For Immediate Release

Information Picket of HOMELESS DEPOT

Home Depot Head Office and Store

Information Picket

Wednesday October 2, 2002 - 12pm

428 Ellesmere Rd Store (Warden and Ellesmere)

On Wednesday October 2, at 12 noon, Tent City residents, Toronto Disaster Relief Committee and supporters will hold an information picket at the Home Depot head office and store.

The Toronto Disaster Relief Committee is calling on Home Depot to:

1. **Treat Tent City residents with respect.** Give them access to their dwellings. Protect their property and their homes. Help them move or store portable structures. Help residents salvage the homes that cannot be moved.
2. **Acknowledge the error of their ways.** Home Depot should make amends by offering \$50,000 per unit in capital funding for construction of 55 units of new social housing – the same number of units that were on the Tent City site – for a total bill of \$2.75 million.
3. **Adopt the One-Percent Solution.** A growing number of groups, including socially responsible corporations, are calling on the Canadian government to restore housing programs that were cancelled in the 1990s. Home Depot should be an active partner in the One Percent Solution, the campaign for a fully-funded national housing program.

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For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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November 19, 2002

For Immediate Release

Leading up to National Housing Day

Walking Tour

Wednesday, November 20, 2002

10 am start from the corner of Berkeley and Esplanade

National Housing Day is just around the corner on Friday, November 22, 2002. Leading up to this historic day, John Sewell will do a public walk through the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood to underline the need for affordable housing. Other former mayors will accompany him as he illustrates how in years past all levels of government pooled their money and expertise to build housing for everyone. Architects and social planners from around the world often tour this area and see it as one of the most successful social housing programs.

The president of the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Residents Association will greet the walking tour and Councillor Olivia Chow will read out the official proclamation of National Housing Day signed by Mayor Mel Lastman. Media will then be invited to visit the apartment of a formerly homeless woman and her child. They reside in one of the last provincially funded co-ops in the province.

The sponsors of the tour include the City of Toronto, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the National Housing and Homelessness Network and the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee. They are also working together to make Toronto's contribution to National Housing Day a huge success. Two dozen communities across Canada, including St. John's, Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, London, Parry Sound, Thunder Bay, Calgary and Edmonton are organizing similar events on that day.

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For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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For immediate release
November 21, 2002

Few new homes, few new provincial dollars:

One year after Affordable Housing Framework Agreement, low-income Canadians still looking for affordable housing

One year after federal, provincial and territorial housing ministers agreed “there is an urgent requirement for short-term measures to increase the availability of affordable housing across Canada” and signed the Affordable Housing Framework Agreement, progress has been painfully slow in building the new homes that are so desperately needed.

A new review by the National Housing and Homelessness Network, released on the first anniversary of the signing of the housing deal, reveals that:

- outside of Quebec, **less than 200 new housing units have actually been built** since the signing of the November, 2001, housing deal.
- **three provinces still haven’t signed a bilateral housing deal** with the federal government, despite promising to do so 12 months ago.
- **the two richest provinces, Ontario and Alberta, cut \$618 million from provincial housing spending** in the current year despite their promise “to increase the supply of affordable housing.” Four other provinces also cut housing spending in 2002-2003.
- **only Quebec and the three territories are taking seriously the commitment** made by all the provinces and territories to match the \$680 million over five years promised by the federal government in the framework agreement.
- **the definition of “affordable housing” has been seriously weakened** in the bilateral housing deals, which means that low and moderate-income households may not be able to afford the rents in many of the new units.

Only Quebec, territories, keeping their commitments

Only Quebec and the three territories are keeping the commitment that every housing minister made last November “to create more affordable housing throughout the country as quickly as possible”, in the words of the official communiqué released at the end of the two-day housing summit. Quebec says that it will fund the development of 2,900 new housing units this year. Other than Quebec, only 100 new units have been built in Saskatchewan and 40 new units in B.C. with funding from the framework agreement over the past 12 months.

One year ago, the federal government agreed to spend \$680 million over five years for new affordable housing. All the provincial and territorial housing ministers signed the framework agreement, which states “Provinces and Territories will be required to match Federal contributions overall.” However, a couple of major loopholes in the housing deal allow the provinces to claim credit for spending by others, including municipalities. And provinces can also get credit for money that they have already spent on previous housing

programs.

Provinces using accounting tricks

“In Ontario, the provincial government is supposed to match the \$245 million that the federal government will spend on new housing over the next five years,” says Michael Shapcott, Co-Chair of the National Housing and Homelessness Network. “But Ontario is only offering a meagre \$20 million in new provincial dollars. The rest of the so-called provincial contribution is coming from deferred property taxes from municipalities, funds already spent by the province and other accounting tricks. But financial sleight of hand won’t fund new housing, which is so desperately needed in Ontario and across Canada.”

Ontario, Alberta cut more than half a billion dollars

In fact, far from matching the new federal dollars, Ontario has cut its provincial housing spending by 42% this year, slashing more than half a billion dollars from its 2002-2003 budget. Alberta’s 2002-2003 spending estimates call for a 50% cut in 2002-2003. A seniors’ supportive housing program and the Alberta Social Housing Corporation are taking the biggest hit – losing about \$80 million.

Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island have also cut their provincial housing spending this year, despite promising last November that they would provide new provincial housing dollars to match the federal funds.

Provinces use federal dollars to replace provincial cuts

In those provinces, and in British Columbia, the new federal money will simply be used to replace provincial spending that has been slashed. British Columbia recently cancelled 1,700 provincially-funded social housing units that had been approved for development. B.C. is planning to replace them with 697 units funded by the federal government under the Affordable Housing Framework Agreement.

“As provinces cut their own housing spending, they’re hoping to replace it with the new federal money,” says Shapcott. “But the promise of last November’s housing deal was that the people of Canada would get more housing, not that the provinces would get federal dollars to replace cuts in provincial spending.”

Newfoundland, New Brunswick, PEI still haven’t signed

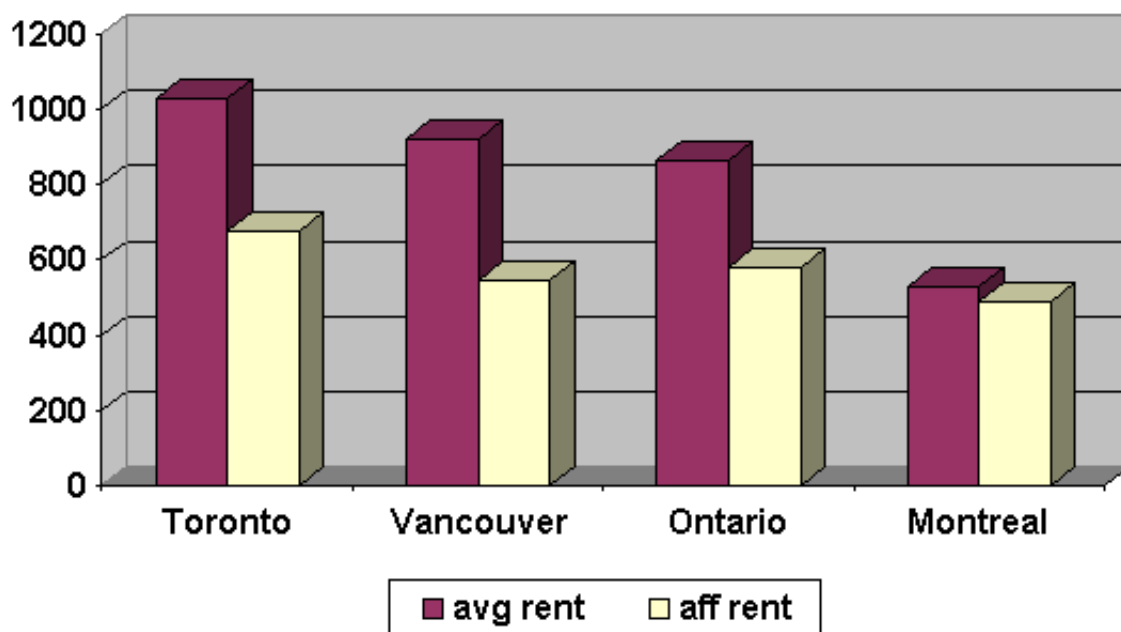
Meanwhile, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island still haven’t even signed a bilateral housing deal with the federal government, even though they promised that they would 12 months ago. The bilateral deals are required before the federal housing dollars can flow to a province or territory.

Many renters can’t afford “average market rents”

Last November’s housing deal requires the provinces and territories “to create affordable housing for low to moderate income households”. However, the bilateral housing deals weaken that requirement by using “average market rents” to define “affordable housing”.

There are more than 1.6 million renter households (one-third of Canada’s 4.8 million renter households) with annual incomes of less than \$14,410, according to Statistics Canada. That means that they can only afford to pay about \$360 a month in rent. Yet average market rents in Toronto are now over \$1,000 a month. In fact, the latest rental market survey from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, there is no place in Canada – not even some of the historically less expensive communities in Atlantic Canada or Quebec – where market rents are less than \$400 per month.

The chart below shows average rents in Toronto, Vancouver and Ontario, along with the affordable rent based on the median income of renter households in those areas. Only in Montreal is the affordable rent of \$490 per month close to the average rent of \$529.



Source: CMHC, Statistics Canada

In Vancouver, the median renter household income is \$21,897. That means that half the 390,000 renter households in that city can afford to pay \$547 or less each month. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Vancouver is \$919. In Toronto, the median income is \$27,039. Half the 780,000 renter households in that city can afford a monthly rent of \$676, yet the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,027.

While the numbers are different in other parts of the country, the pattern is much the same. Low, moderate and middle-income renter households saw their household income fall by 3% (adjusted for inflation) from 1984 to 1999 and have faced rapidly increasing average rents in recent years. Current average rents do not reflect the amount tenants can afford to pay, but are squeezing a growing number into desperate conditions.

In addition to the capital funds that the federal government is providing, under the terms of the Affordable Housing Framework Agreement, to get the units built, the provinces and territories need to provide rent supplements or other rent-geared-to-income subsidies to low-income households so that they can afford to move into the new homes. Quebec is offering rental subsidies as part of its housing program and so is British Columbia.

Rent supplements required

But Ontario isn't offering any new rent supplement money to go along with the 10,000 new units that are supposed to be built in that province over the next five years. In August of 2002, the province announced plans for 1,000 "new" shelter allowances, but there was nothing new about the announcement. It was the same units that had already been announced several times since the first announcement in 1999. And the funding for these shelter allowances isn't even provincial money. It comes from surplus federal housing dollars.

One Percent Solution - \$2 billion annually for new social housing

The National Housing and Homelessness Network is calling on the federal government to adopt the One Percent Solution, which calls for \$2 billion annually in new spending on social housing. The federal commitment of \$680 million over five years amounts to \$136 million annually – or less than 7% of the One Percent Solution.

For more information on housing and homelessness in Canada, and the National Housing and Homelessness Network, contact the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee at: 416-599-8372

Monday, December 23, 2002

For Immediate Release

BRIAN BOYD (1963-2002) Homeless Man and Outspoken Advocate for Housing has Died.

At Christmas we remember a homeless person who was born 2000 years ago. We must also remember a modern homeless man's life and death.

Brian Boyd, a homeless man, and an advocate for the homeless passed away December 20, 2002. He was 39 years old and had just celebrated his birthday December 13th, 2002.

Brian was the first person to receive a pre-fabricated house at Tent City. He attended and spoke out at many rallies against homelessness and poverty. He was prominently featured in the documentary "Shelter from the Storm," which aired on CBC Witness on October 31, 2001. Just last week Brian was interviewed on CBC television about the ticketing of homeless people by the Toronto Police.

"The Toronto Disaster Relief Committee will always remember Brian, a man who had little but shared what he had, and spoke out about the plight of others. This Christmas we will particularly remember him because he was staying in one of the shelters in which the TDRC took a secret video just last week. There would be no homeless if our country's governments had listened to his reasoned voice. Our country will miss him," says Beric German of the TDRC.

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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Reports / Articles

July 2002 <i>NEW</i>	Can Canada Afford to Help Cities, Provide Social Housing, and End Homelessness?	David Hulchanski
June 2002	How Affordable is the New Federal-Provincial Housing Program?	Daily Bread Food Bank
May 2002	Where's the Housing?	National Housing and Homelessness Network (NHHN)
May 2000	A Report on A Decade of Child and Family Poverty in Canada	Campaign 2000
February 2002	Home-Made Solutions Report	TDRC
2002	A Decade of Decline: Poverty and Income Inequality in Toronto in the 1990s	United Way
2002	Our Health... Our Say	Ontario Health Coalition
March 2002	Women and Housing in Canada: Barriers to Equality	Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation
December 2001	Worst Christmas Ever Report	TDRC
November 2001	State of the Crisis Report	NHHN
October 2001	State of the Disaster - Update	TDRC
August 2001	A Tale of Two Canadas: Homeowners getting richer, renters getting poorer	David Hulchanski
June 2001	Canada's Dirty Little Secret	NHHN
April 2001	Housing, Homelessness, Poverty -- and Free Trade in Canada	Michael Shapcott
Summer 2001	How to turn promises into housing for all	NHHN
January 2001	Homelessness and Health, Canadian Medical Association Journal	Dr. Stephen Hwang
2001	The Report Card on Homelessness	City of Toronto
Winter 2000	State of the Disaster	TDRC
2000	Tell Ottawa - We need Real Money for a National Housing Strategy	NHHN
September 2000	Open Letter to Housing Ministers	NHHN
August 2000	Who's the Target? An Evaluation of Community Action Policing	Committee to Stop Targeted Policing
March 2000	Did the weather cause Canada's Mass Homelessness? Homeless-Making Processes and Canada's Homeless-Makers	TDRC
March 2000	Open Letter to the Prime Minister	TDRC
February 2000	Toronto - Where are your Priorities? (re: Olympics)	TDRC
February 2000	People without Housing: Homelessness is a Human Rights Violation	David Hulchanski

February 2000	Homelessness in Ontario - Ontario Pre-Budget Consultation Submission	TDRC
February 2000	Legal Second Suites: A Step Towards Ending Homelessness in Toronto	TDRC
February 2000	Housing and Budget 2000 - Cruel Disappointment for Homeless	NHHN
February 2000	Paul Martin's Solutions to Canada's Housing Problems	TDRC
November 1999	Federal Pre-Budget Consultation Submission	TDRC
March 1999	Death on the Streets of Canada	TDRC
December 1998	Homeless People vs the Federal and Provincial Government: People's Court	TDRC
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	Questions and Answer: Homelessness in Canada	David Hulchanski

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National Housing and Homelessness Network

For immediate release
May 14, 2002

Province-by-province update: Nine of ten fail to make the grade

All ten provinces signed the Affordable Housing Framework Agreement in Quebec City in November of 2001. The federal government agreed to provide \$680 million over five years for new affordable housing. The provinces agreed to match the federal funds, although the Quebec City deal gives them “wiggle room” to get credit for spending by third parties.

ONLY QUEBEC HAS FULLY MATCHED FEDERAL FUNDS: All ten provinces agreed to provide matching funding, but only Quebec has met this commitment. B.C. said it would match federal funds, but provincial housing cuts means there will be little or no net gain of new units.

ONLY QUEBEC AND B.C. HAVE SIGNED AGREEMENTS: All ten provinces agreed that there was an urgent need to act quickly. Six months later, only two have signed bilateral deals.

FIVE OF TEN PROVINCES HAVE CUT HOUSING SPENDING: All ten provinces agreed that new affordable housing is an urgent priority, but Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia have all made cuts to provincial housing spending, according to Estimates tabled by the provinces along with their most recent provincial budgets. British Columbia and New Brunswick are maintaining current spending, while only Quebec and Newfoundland are increasing spending. Ontario hasn't released its 2002-2003 budget, but since the province downloaded the entire cost of housing programs to municipalities in 1998, the province spends practically nothing on new housing. And that is not expected to change.

THE BOTTOM LINE: All the provinces said there was an urgent need to take action, but only two have signed bilateral deals six months after the Quebec City housing summit. All the provinces agreed to commit substantial funds to new affordable housing for low and moderate-income households, but every province – except for Quebec – has failed to commit substantial new funds. Five provinces are planning major housing spending cuts, which means that there will be a net loss of housing funding in those provinces, despite the commitments made in the Affordable Housing Framework Agreement in November of 2002.

For more information, contact the National Housing and Homelessness Network at 416-599-8372.

<i>Province</i>	<i>Matching funds</i>	<i>Signed deal</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Quebec	Yes. The Quebec government is committing \$105 million and Quebec municipalities will contribute another \$57 million. In addition, Quebec has	Yes	Despite this strong commitment, hundreds of families will be homeless this summer as the Quebec

	<p>extended its provincially-funded Access Logis program for another five years.</p> <p>Quebec has set the lead by immediately committing a matching share of federal funding, and adding its own.</p>		<p>housing crisis outpaces the funding for new housing.</p> <p>Rapid drop in rental vacancy rates in Montreal, Quebec City, Hull, Sherbrooke signals a serious crisis.</p>
British Columbia	<p>Yes, but. . . the province is only adding \$4 million to existing housing spending of \$136.5 million, despite its promise in Quebec City to provide an additional \$17.75 million annually. B.C. will have to cut even more existing spending to come up with its matching share.</p> <p>B.C. is closing provincially-funded care facilities and moving residents into an already critical rental housing market.</p> <p>While the B.C.-federal agreement is supposed to fund up to 3,500 new units over five years, all or most of those units will be taken by people who are losing their beds in provincial facilities, leading to no net increase in affordable housing.</p> <p>Meanwhile, 1,000 units already approved for development have been shelved by the B.C. government.</p>	Yes	<p>Victoria has the worst rental housing market in the country. Vancouver is not far behind.</p> <p>The B.C. government is using the old provincial gambit of taking federal funds to replace provincial spending that it is cutting.</p> <p>B.C. is using housing dollars to pay for the shortfall in health care spending, pitting the needs of frail elderly seniors against poor families, singles, people with disabilities, Aboriginals and newcomers.</p>
Alberta	<p>No matching funds committed. Alberta cut seniors, family and special purpose housing spending by \$22 million (13%) to \$157 million in 2002 Budget, with a further cut of \$10.6 million next year. Alberta cut \$50 million in lottery funds that helped, among others, housing and homelessness initiatives.</p> <p>The latest cuts come on top of \$93.2 million in previous cuts. From 1993 to 1999, Alberta cut housing spending by 67% - the biggest drop by any province.</p>	No	<p>Alberta has one of the worst rental markets in the country, with vacancy rates at the crisis level in Calgary, Edmonton and other centers, and annual rent increases running at close to 9% in Edmonton.</p>
Saskatchewan	<p>No matching funds committed. The province has cut \$2.7 million from housing spending, down to \$33.5</p>	No	

	million in 2002-2003.		
Manitoba	No matching funds committed. The province is making an 18% cut in housing spending, down to \$35.6 million in 2002-2003.	No	
Ontario	Limited matching funds committed. Ontario has only offered \$20 million to date - about 8% of its matching share of \$245 million. No new housing funds are expected in 2002 provincial budget, which will be delivered in May or June. Ontario cut \$304 million from provincial housing spending from 1993 to 1999.	No	Ontario wants housing developers to provide significant equity, which could block co-ops and non-profits from participating. The province may raise other barriers to prevent non-profits and co-ops from accessing the housing funds.
New Brunswick	No matching funds committed. The 2002-2003 budget sets housing services increase at less than 1%. The budget did deliver \$110 million in personal tax cuts and \$31 million in corporate cuts and a surplus of \$21.3 million.	No	The four Atlantic provinces want a common deal with Ottawa that would flow most of the funds into rehab of existing units, rather than new construction.
Prince Edward Island	No matching funds committed. The 2002-2003 budget calls for a slight decrease in housing spending.	No	See note on New Brunswick.
Nova Scotia	No matching funds committed. The 2002-2003 budget calls for a huge 25% cut in the housing spending from \$18.2 million in 2001 to \$13.7 million in 2002.	No	See note on New Brunswick. Halifax vacancy rate fell from 7.7% in 1997 to 2.8% in 2001, signalling a crisis in new supply.
Newfoundland	No matching funds committed. The 2002-2003 provincial budget sets a 10% increase in the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation budget to \$10.1 million.	No	See note on New Brunswick. St. John's vacancy rate fell from 16.6% in 1997 to 2.5% in 2001, signalling a crisis in new supply.

For more information, contact Toronto Disaster Relief Committee -- the secretariat for the National Housing and Homelessness Network at 416-599-8372 or by email at tdrc@tdrc.net

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November 9, 1999

Submission to: House of Commons Standing
Committee on Finance
RE: Federal Pre-Budget Consultation Process
From: Toronto Disaster Relief Committee

I The Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC)

Who Are We?

The Toronto Disaster Relief Committee is a group of social policy, health care and housing experts, academics, business people, community health workers, social workers, AIDS activists, anti-poverty activists, people with homelessness experience, and members of the faith community. We have worked with homeless people, studied homelessness, served on numerous committees and task forces, and have watched the homeless crisis worsen daily. We have bandaged the injuries caused by being homeless and have attended the funerals of many people.

Our founding members are:

Cathy Crowe, RN, Queen West Community Health Centre, a street outreach nurse
Beric German, Street Health AIDS Outreach Program
David Hulchanski, Professor of Housing, University of Toronto
John Andras, co-founder of Project Warmth, Vice-President Research Capital Corp
Trevor Gray, AIDS ACTION NOW
Brent Patterson, Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE)
Maurice Adongo Street Health
Paula Dolezal, Street Health Mental Health Outreach Program
Peter Rosenthal, lawyer and University of Toronto Professor
Rev. Don (Dan) Heap (Anglican), former MP (Trinity Spadina)
Jeannie Loughrey, Anglican Priest, Diocese of Toronto
Frank Showler, Member of Board of St. Claire's Inter-faith Housing
Sherrie Golden, Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP)
Sue Osborne, Housing Support Worker, Cornerstone Women's Residence
David Walsh, President Realco Property Ltd.
Michael Shapcott, Co-op Housing Federation of Canada - Ontario Region
Gaetan Heroux
Steve Lane

Each member brings their specific experience and expertise to the collective efforts of the TDRC. Together we cover a wide range of the related issues and speak for a large and broad community. This community includes people who are or who have experienced homelessness, frontline workers, activists and concerned citizens and, though centered in Toronto, spreads across the country. Our work has led directly to the formation of at least two other organizations, working hard and fast to end homelessness and ease the housing crisis: the British Columbia Housing and Homeless Network (BCHHN) and the National Housing And Homeless Network (NHHN).

Currently the TDRC is endorsed by over 400 organizations, including the city councils of Toronto, Ottawa-Carleton, Nepean and Vancouver, the Big City Mayors' Caucus of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Federal Caucus of the National Democratic Party, the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA), the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, the National Anti-Poverty Association, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Auto Workers, and the Canadian Health Coalition and the Children's Aid Society (Toronto).

Emergency Declaration

By endorsing the TDRC, these city councils, national organizations and citizens of Canada indicate their support for our **declaration that homelessness in Canada is a National Disaster**. Our Emergency Declaration reads:

"That the Provincial and Federal Governments be requested to declare homelessness a national disaster requiring emergency humanitarian relief and be urged to immediately develop and implement a National Homelessness Relief and Prevention Strategy using disaster relief funds, both to provide the homeless with immediate health protection and housing and to prevent further homelessness."

We are encouraging all people, organizations and levels of government to explicitly recognize homelessness as a disaster and to immediately take appropriate action in all communities throughout the country. We urge the federal government to declare homelessness a national disaster.

For your reference, I have attached a copy of our "State of Emergency Declaration" booklet and list of our endorsers.

Why is homelessness a Disaster?

We have asked ourselves these questions:

- Why is this human crisis not treated the same as other crises where people lose their housing and have their family and community networks disrupted, like the ice storm in Quebec and Eastern Ontario, or like the floods in Manitoba?
- Why are governments not responding to the physical and mental harm, including death, caused by being homeless?
- Why are they ignoring the spread of disease such as tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and hepatitis?
- Why is it that our public officials fail to recognize that tens of thousands of people without housing and without adequate food and health care constitutes one of the largest and most serious national disasters that Canada has ever faced?

Disasters, natural or man-made, are not restricted to countries in the tropics, but their consequences are similar. The evidence that the crisis of homelessness in this city, this province and in this country has become such a disaster, started to accumulate in late 1995 and early 1996. This included: serious overcrowding of our day and overnight shelter system; a 38% tuberculosis infection rate among the homeless; clusters of freezing deaths of homeless people; a rise in overall morbidity, including malnutrition; the spread of infectious disease; and a rise in the number of homeless deaths. A recent study, conducted by Dr. Steven Huang of St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, showed that homeless men aged 18-24 had a mortality rate 8 times than the general population and men aged 25-44 had a mortality rate 4 times as high. This is unacceptable. Despite Canada's reputation for providing relief to people made temporarily homeless by natural disasters, our governments are unwilling to help the scores of thousands of people in Canada condemned to homelessness. We urge you, the federal government to mobilize in the face of this Homeless

Disaster, and come to the aid of this one's victims - before the next person dies.

What does it mean to declare homelessness a Disaster?

Declaring homelessness a National Disaster and Emergency allows all levels of government to immediately implement Emergency Humanitarian Relief and Prevention Measures. The strategy must provide the homeless with immediate health protection and housing and it must institute measures that prevent further homelessness. The first such measure must be a massive reinvestment in the construction of affordable housing. Other important measures are the funding of necessary support services and adequate social assistance.

Homelessness is a Serious Human Rights Violation

All human rights violations are acts that disregard human dignity and the rule of law. The moral and ethical codes of the World's religions, international law, the Canadian Charter of Rights and

Freedoms, and federal and provincial human rights legislation, oblige Canadians and Canadian governments to refrain from acts, omissions, or other measures that result in violations of human rights. The very existence of people who do not have any housing is by itself a most serious human rights violation. Societies with homeless people amidst great prosperity have established and are maintaining homeless-creating processes - day-to-day 'normal' mechanisms which result in people becoming unhoused and remaining unhoused, often for long periods of time. These are dehousing processes. The most basic human rights of a section of our community are being violated. Again, we cannot sit idly by and let this misery and death continue. The time to act is now.

Attached you will find the report the TDRC submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Committee regarding Canada's compliance with Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, "Death on the Streets of Canada," and the Committee's response, dated April 7 1999, in which they condemn Canada's record in regards to homelessness. Also attached is a copy of the proceeding of a "People's Court," held in Toronto last December, "Homeless People v. the Government of Canada and the Government of the Province of Ontario," in regards to both governments violations of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

II The Homelessness Disaster

A - Snapshots from the Disaster sites

Toronto

In Toronto the Disaster is flourishing. You will see it in a hundred ways every day, including:

- the people panhandling for spare change to survive
- the older men and women shoveling leftover casseroles from a soup kitchen into little plastic bags to take home to their rooming house or squat
- the wet sleeping bags left in a pile on a street corner
- the permanent homes erected in alleyways, on grates, in squats, parks and under bridges
- the church basements that are now open for emergency shelter, filled with people following a path of forced migration from church to church every night of the week in the winter.

There is no longer enough room in Toronto's emergency hostel system to provide safe shelter for this Disaster's victims. John Jagt, Toronto's Director of Hostel Services, reported on September 22 that the hostels were "totally full." It is dangerous and unhealthy to run any shelter system at 100+ capacity. Attached

you will find our position paper, "Why Open the Armouries" that explains why this is so. However, despite the horrendous overcrowded conditions in Toronto's shelters, people are so desperate to get off the streets that during one rainstorm last month an overnight emergency shelter had to take in 126 people, far more than the 80 or so they are set up to handle. People were crowded elbow to elbow, some sleeping on mats, while others were left on the concrete floor. Staff had to refuse to admit anyone else and people heard pounding on the door and screaming outside.

In Toronto, the largest growing group of people suffering in this Disaster are children and families - The Report of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force, led by Dr. Anne Golden and funded by federal monies, released this past January, tells us that families make up 46% of the people using Toronto hostels in 1996.

In 1990 the Children's Aid Society of Toronto found that lack of adequate housing was a significant issue for almost 1 in 5 of the children coming into their care. You will find the summary of this study attached. The workers at the Children's Aid Society, Toronto assure us that this proportion has only increased in the last 9 years since the study was conducted.

Ontario

Across Ontario, this Homeless Disaster has left a visible trail of death. October's issue of the "Mortem Post" cautions coroners in Ontario to consider homelessness as a factor as they proceed in their investigation, autopsies and inquests.

And the housing crisis looms ever larger in Ontario, bringing more and more people to the brink of homelessness and then onto the province's streets. *Where's Home*, the most thorough study with the latest data available on housing conditions currently available, (sponsored by the Ontario Non Profit Housing Association, CHFC - Ontario Region and Putting Housing Back on the Public Agenda,) tells us that:

- over 300,000 tenant households in Ontario are paying more than 50% of their incomes on rent, thereby at immediate risk of homelessness. That is **one in four tenant households in Ontario that are at risk of homelessness**.
- in most parts of Ontario, tenant incomes are falling even as rents rise faster than inflation.
- about 16,000 new rental units are needed annually according to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), but almost no new affordable rental housing is being built.
- in Barrie, a town representative of many in Ontario, there was a 1,235% increase in stays at homeless shelters from 1994 to 1998.
- many, many new cities, towns and regions in the province are opening shelter, conducting studies, convening task forces including Brampton, Muskoka and Peterborough. Peel Region recently endorsed the TDRC Disaster Declaration!

Canada

Conservative estimates of the number of people who are homeless in Canada are around 200,000 - that is 1 in 153 Canadians. Homeless people suffering as victims of this Disaster across Canada face the same risks: tuberculosis infection (it is up at 38% in some shelter populations); 6 times the risk of HIV infection; depression; post traumatic stress disorder; starvation (!); and death.

People are dying from homelessness across the country. In Toronto, front-line workers and corners alike report an average of 2 deaths per week. This past September Anishnawbe Street Patrol found a homeless person dead in Nathan Phillips Square. In Halifax 14 women have died in the shelter system in the last 3 years. And they are dying in Ottawa too. As of October 4, 1999 Ottawa has lost at least 43 people to

homelessness. Last March Lynn Marie Bluecloud, pregnant, froze to death in a park in view of the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill itself.

B - Homelessness is about lack of housing, period.

The only thing homeless people have in common is that they are unhoused. Affordable housing is the key to ending homelessness and easing the housing crisis in Canada. Research in all jurisdictions including Canada and the United States clearly concludes that the availability of long term affordable rental housing is the solution of 80% of the people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Attached you will find the press release (and selected text from the American Journal of Public Health in which it appeared) announcing a recent and well regarded New York University study, "Predictors of Homelessness Among Families in New York City," that found, amongst other things, regardless of the specific personal histories and/or contexts of homeless people lives, almost all remained "stably housed" when they received appropriate housing.

Homeless is the fallout of the twin problems of affordability and supply. Build enough affordable housing and return to more equitable social assistance levels and you will house the vast majority of Canada's homeless people in one fell swoop.

C - Homelessness: A Man-Made Policy Disaster

The following is a select chronology of federal policy decisions made since 1984 that have directly led to Canada's current Homeless Disaster and housing crisis.

1984 **November Economic Statement** - recently elected Mulroney government announces cuts of \$217.8 million over seven years to non-profit, rural and native housing

1985 **New federal housing programs** - new program cost-shared with provinces; second unilateral federal program based on index-linked mortgages

1986 **Federal Budget** - cuts of \$80.3 million over seven years from rental RRAP and other housing funds

1989 **Federal Budget** - cut of \$146 million over five years to rental RRAP

1990 **Federal Budget** - cut new housing commitments by 15% and reduced housing research budget for total cuts of \$58.4 million

Liberal Task Force on Housing - national Liberal Task Force on Housing calls for "national vision" and "national direction" on housing and homelessness

1991 **Federal Budget** - continued 15% cut on new housing commitments, reduced operating and research budget for housing, for total cuts of \$54.8

1992 **Federal Budget** - development of new co-ops canceled , more cuts to other social housing, research cuts, total cuts of \$600 million over five years

Economic and Fiscal Statement - further caps on new social housing

1993 **Federal Budget** - canceled development of new non-profit housing and more research cuts for total cuts of \$600 million over five years

1994 **Federal Budget** - first Martin budget, but no new funds for social housing, despite commitments of Martin's Liberal Task Force on Housing

1996 **Federal Budget** - federal government announces plan to abandon social housing by transferring administration of federal programs to provinces and territories

1999 **Homelessness Minister** - the first federal homelessness minister, Claudette Bradshaw, is appointed; she heads out on a cross-country tour

Sources: Prof. Tom Carter (Winnipeg), Prof. David Hulchanski (Toronto), Alexandra Wilson, Joan Selby and Michael Shapcott (CHF Canada)

III National Problem, National Solution

Many have spoken of the role the federal government and its policies have played in the creation of the current housing and homelessness crisis. They have, and will continue to speak, of how the crisis is not isolated in Toronto alone but is truly a "made in Canada" problem which demands Canada-wide solutions. The responsibility the federal government has to provide the affordable and supportive housing that is needed to end the Homeless Disaster, not only by housing its current victims, but by also preventing further people from becoming homeless, cannot be overstated.

We are here today to make recommendations on how the federal government should budget its money in the upcoming years. Our message is simple: spend money on housing. The citizens of Canada need their government to spearhead a massive reinvestment in affordable housing programs and related initiatives, such as appropriate supports and just levels of social assistance, to end homelessness. All levels of government need to be involved in the solution, and this is your chance to stop the jurisdictional squabbling that has only led to a paralysis in terms of solutions.

The One Percent Solution

The single most important thing that we can all do to end homelessness in Canada is to implement a National Housing Strategy. At this point in time, Canada is the only industrialized country not to have a national housing policy.

To fund a national housing strategy the TDRC proposes the **One Percent Solution** - that all levels of government spend an additional one percent of their existing total budgets on housing. The One Percent Solution is based on a calculation of the combined spending of all levels of government - federal, provincial, territorial and municipal. Add up the amount of money all levels of government are spending on housing and it equals about one percent of overall government spending. **The One Percent Solution calls for a doubling of this overall number.** That means, in simple terms, that every government needs to **** double **** what it is currently spending on housing. The One Percent Solution is not based on one percent of any particular government's spending, but one percent of all governments' spending.

On average, in 1994-95, the federal, provincial and municipal governments of Canada spent \$3.83 billion out of a total of \$358 billion dollar budget on housing. Currently, the federal government alone spends about \$2 billion on housing and related initiatives left over from before the cuts started in 1984. Therefore, **The One Percent Solution requires you to allocate an additional \$2 billion to housing - to the creation of new affordable housing supply programs and related homeless initiatives.**

In taking the lead in implementing a national housing strategy based on the One Percent Solution the federal government would also bring the provinces back into supplying affordable housing. In Ontario, doubling the amount spent on housing in Ontario would make approximately 1.75 billion dollars available.

Introducing the One Percent Solution would not only substantially increase the number of housing units but would also increase the support services for people who need housing. There would be funding for new construction, renovation of existing units and subsidies for people on low incomes.

Hundreds of organizations and institutions across Canada have endorsed the One Percent Solutions and have sent letters of support to senior members of your government. They include the Canadian Housing Renewal Association (CHRA), Canadian Pensioners Concerned, Science For Peace, The Faculty of Nursing at the University of Toronto, the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, the Co-op Housing Federation of Canada and the Federal NDP Party. The outpouring of letters from individual supporters continues to be overwhelming.

The One Percent Solution campaign is roughly on the same scale as the funding and targets the National Housing Options Paper of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), which we therefore support. The FCM housing proposal is estimated at this point to cost about 2 billion dollars. The National Housing Policy Options Paper sets a target of 700,000 units over ten years - that's 20,000 new affordable units annually, 10,000 new rehabilitated units annually and 40,000 new "relief of affordability" units annually (that is, rent supplement or shelter allowance units).

Summing up, The One Percent Solution is:

- **Affordable:** The 1% Solution is affordable, at about 50 cents per tax payer per day.
- **A Modest, but important proposal:** set against the huge and growing need of affordable housing and services, the 1 % Solution is a modest but important proposal.
- **Mainly 'catch up' spending:** in real terms, the 1% Solution is in fact only replacing the huge amount of money cut out of housing and related programs by the federal government since 1984.
- **Funding for all 3 parts of the solution:** The funds would supply (1) adequate housing, (2) adequate support services, and (3) adequate social assistance — *thereby ending mass homelessness in Canada.*

IV Conclusion

The homeless and underhoused in Canada do not constitute a "special interest group." We are *not* asking for favours or charity. Adequate and affordable shelter is not a luxury. It is a basic human right that is being denied far to many people in Canada right now. You, the federal government, have the means to change that - and we urge that you act to do so immediately. It is your responsibility to address the problems and crises of the collective. For you do to anything else, and for us to proceed in any other context, is to misinterpret why we elect governments in the first place.

- Implement the One Percent Solution.
- Build the necessary homes.
- Raise the social assistance rates to justly reflect the economic reality of poverty in this country.

1 in 153 of us are without homes - and this is not because 1 in 153 of us are drug addicts, disabled, insane or made "bad choices" - it is because there are simply not enough good homes out there that we can afford.

The past three decades have known many housing success stories across the country. We have a wealth of

knowledge about how to provide good housing and support services; we lack only the resources to get the job done and end the suffering that homeless people in Canada face in the streets and shelters every day. You must take the lead. The recent Throne Speech from Ottawa was not strong enough on homelessness. We are worried that the federal government plans to continue to act irresponsibly in the face of the Homeless Disaster and do nothing. Inaction such as this betrays many thousands of people to a miserable existence and harms our society for years to come. Morally, economically, socially and legally, we cannot allow homelessness to become a "normal" part of Canadian life. The federal government must take the lead and ACT NOW so that it does not do so.

I leave you with the following words:

Canada is presently confronted with a major housing crisis. In recent months, this Task Force has heard from every region of this country and everywhere the message is the same: the situation is critical; and immediate action is necessary to correct the problem. Every part of the country is faced with difficulties related to its particular circumstances.

The federal government has abandoned its responsibilities with regards to housing problems...The housing crisis is growing at an alarming rate and the government sits there and does nothing; it refuses to apply the urgent measures that are required to reverse this deteriorating situation...The federal government's role would be that of a partner working with other levels of government, and private and public housing groups. But leadership must come from one source; and a national vision requires some national direction...[the federal government must be the] vigorous leader of [these] comprehensive efforts [because] only the national government has the financial resources to address the full dimensions of the needs of this country.

These are the words of your own Finance Minister Paul Martin, written in 1990 in his report, with MP Joe Fontana, "Finding Room: Housing Solutions for the Future, Report of the National Liberal Caucus Task Force on Housing."

We urge you listen and respond to these words, remembering that the situation has only gotten dramatically worse in the last 9 years. Take the strong action they demand and designate massive new funding, a minimum of 2 billion dollars, in the next budget for a National Housing Strategy. Do this and you will all be heroes for generations to come.

Submitted respectfully by Kira Heineck, Co-ordinator, Toronto Disaster Relief Committee

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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February 2000

HOMELESSNESS IN ONTARIO

The Year 2000 Ontario Budget Priority

TDRC Submission to the Pre-Budget Consultation Standing Committee
on Finance and Economic Affairs Ontario Legislature
3 February 2000

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1. The TDRC: Who Are We?

The Toronto Disaster Relief Committee is a group of social policy, health care and housing experts, academics, business people, community health workers, social workers, AIDS activists, anti-poverty activists, people with homelessness experience, and members of the faith community.

We have worked with homeless people, studied homelessness, served on numerous committees and task forces, and have watched the homeless crisis worsen daily. We have bandaged the injuries caused by being homeless and have attended the funerals of many people.

Our founding members are:

- Cathy Crowe, RN, Queen West Community Health Centre, a street outreach nurse
- Beric German, Street Health AIDS Outreach Program
- David Hulchanski, Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto
- John Andras, co-founder of Project Warmth, Vice-President, Research Capital Corp
- Trevor Gray, AIDS Action Now
- Brent Patterson, Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange
- Maurice Adongo Street Health
- Paula Dolezal, Street Health Mental Health Outreach Program
- Peter Rosenthal, lawyer and University of Toronto professor
- Rev. Don (Dan) Heap (Anglican), former MP (Trinity Spadina)
- Jeannie Loughrey, Anglican Priest, Diocese of Toronto
- Frank Showler, Member of Board of St. Claire's Inter-faith Housing
- Sherrie Golden, Ontario Coalition Against Poverty
- Sue Osborne, Housing Support Worker, Cornerstone Women's Residence
- David Walsh, President Realco Property Ltd.
- Michael Shapcott, Co-op Housing Federation of Canada - Ontario Region
- Gaetan Heroux
- Steve Lane

Each member brings their specific experience and expertise to the collective efforts of the TDRC. Together we cover a wide range of the related issues and speak for a large and broad community. This community includes people who are or who have experienced homelessness, frontline workers, activists and concerned citizens and, though centred in Toronto, spreads across the country. Our work has led directly to the formation of at least two other organizations, working hard and fast to end homelessness and ease the housing crisis:

- the National Housing And Homeless Network (NHHN). and
- the British Columbia Housing and Homeless Network (BCHHN).

The TDRC is endorsed by over 400 organizations, including the city councils of Toronto, Ottawa-Carleton, Nepean and Vancouver, the Big City Mayors' Caucus of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Federal Caucus of the National Democratic Party, the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA), the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, the National Anti-Poverty Association, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Auto Workers, and the Canadian Health Coalition and the Children's Aid Society (Toronto).

2. The Emergency Declaration

By endorsing the TDRC, these city councils, national organizations and citizens of Canada indicate their support for our declaration that homelessness in Canada is a National Disaster. Our Emergency Declaration reads:

"That the Provincial and Federal Governments be requested to declare homelessness a national disaster requiring emergency humanitarian relief and be urged to immediately develop and implement a National Homelessness Relief and Prevention Strategy using disaster relief funds, both to provide the homeless with immediate health protection and housing and to prevent further homelessness."

We are encouraging all people, organizations and levels of government to explicitly recognize

homelessness as a disaster and to immediately take appropriate action in all communities throughout the country. We urge the federal government to declare homelessness a national disaster.

3. Why is homelessness a Disaster?

We have asked ourselves these questions:

- Why is this human crisis not treated the same as other crises where people lose their housing and have their family and community networks disrupted, like the ice storm in Quebec and Eastern Ontario, or like the floods in Manitoba?
- Why are governments not responding to the physical and mental harm, including death, caused by being homeless?
- Why are they ignoring the spread of disease such as tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and hepatitis?
- Why is it that our public officials fail to recognize that tens of thousands of people without housing and without adequate food and health care constitutes one of the largest and most serious national disasters that Canada has ever faced?

Disasters, natural or man-made, are not restricted to countries in the tropics, but their consequences are similar.

The evidence that the crisis of homelessness in this city, this province and in this country has become such a disaster started to accumulate in late 1995 and early 1996. This included:

- serious overcrowding of our day and overnight shelter system;
- a 38% tuberculosis infection rate among the homeless;
- clusters of freezing deaths of homeless people;
- a rise in overall morbidity, including malnutrition;
- the spread of infectious disease; and
- a rise in the number of homeless deaths.

A recent study, conducted by Dr. Stephen Huang of St. Michael's Hospital and the University of Toronto's Medical School, found that homeless men aged 18-24 had a mortality rate 8 times than the general population and men aged 25-44 had a mortality rate 4 times as high. This is unacceptable.

Despite Canada's reputation for providing relief to people made temporarily homeless by natural disasters, our governments are unwilling to help the scores of thousands of people in Canada condemned to homelessness. We urge you, the federal government to mobilize in the face of this Homeless Disaster, and come to the aid of this one's victims - before the next person dies.

4. What does it mean to declare homelessness a Disaster?

Declaring homelessness a National Disaster and Emergency allows all levels of government to immediately implement Emergency Humanitarian Relief and Prevention Measures.

The strategy must provide the homeless with immediate health protection and housing and it must institute

measures that prevent further homelessness. In any disaster, people are provided with emergency assistance. Then permanent measures are implemented.

The solution to homelessness – its elimination and prevention -- is:

1. Housing: all homeless people require adequate and appropriate housing they can afford.
2. Income: all homeless people require enough money to live on (e.g., a job, job training, adequate pension or social assistance).
3. Support Services: some homeless people require support services.

The first such measure must be a massive reinvestment in the construction of affordable housing. Money spent providing expensive services to people without a place to live is money down the drain.

5. Homelessness is a Serious Human Rights Violation

All human rights violations are acts that disregard human dignity and the rule of law.

The moral and ethical codes of the World's religions, international law, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and federal and provincial human rights legislation, oblige Canadians and Canadian governments to refrain from acts, omissions, or other measures that result in violations of human rights.

The very existence of people who do not have any housing is by itself a most serious human rights violation.

In December 4, 1998 the United Nation's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Geneva, in its review of Canada's compliance, issued its strongest criticism ever of any Western nation's human rights record.

This severe criticism of Canada reminds all nations that the failure to address and prevent homelessness is a most serious human rights violation.

Eight paragraphs in the Committee's report on Canada refer to homelessness. One refers to the Toronto Disaster Relief's national disaster declaration.

24. The Committee is gravely concerned that such a wealthy country as Canada has allowed the problem of homelessness and inadequate housing to grow to such proportions that the mayors of Canada's ten largest cities have now declared homelessness a national disaster.

34. The Committee is concerned that the State Party did not take into account the Committee's 1993 major concerns and recommendations when it adopted policies at federal, provincial and territorial levels which exacerbated poverty and homelessness among vulnerable groups during a time of strong economic growth and increasing affluence.

In March 1999 the TDRC submitted a detailed report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee. This is the other of the two major human rights review committees within the UN. The TDRC report had a clear and blunt title:

Death on the Streets of Canada: A Report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee Regarding Compliance with Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by Canada.

This report helped draw the UN Committee's attention to homelessness, resulting in the following comment in the Committee's final report on Canada:

"12. The Committee is concerned that homelessness has led to serious health problems and even to death. The Committee recommends that the State party take positive measures required by article 6 to address this serious problem."

In addition, there was enough evidence of the role public policy has played in Canada's homelessness disaster for an embarrassed Canadian Government delegation to promise the UN to hold Parliamentary hearings into the human rights concerns of the Committee. The UN Committee explicitly reminded the Government of Canada of this promise in the third paragraph of its final report, issued on April 7, 1999.

"3. The Committee welcomes the delegation's commitment to take actions to ensure effective follow-up in Canada of the Committee's concluding observations and to further develop and improve mechanisms for ongoing review of compliance of the State Party with the provisions of the Covenant. In particular, the Committee welcomes the delegations' commitment to inform public opinion in Canada about the Committee's concerns and recommendations, to distribute the Committee's concluding observations to all members of Parliament and to ensure that a parliamentary committee will hold hearings of issues arising from the Committee's observations."

The Canadian government has not kept its promise.

Societies with homeless people amidst great prosperity have established and are maintaining homeless-creating processes - day-to-day 'normal' mechanisms which result in people becoming unhoused and remaining unhoused, often for long periods of time. These are dehousing processes. The most basic human rights of a group of people within our communities are being violated.

We cannot sit idly by and let this misery and death continue. The time to act is now.

6. The Homelessness Disaster: In Toronto

In Toronto the Disaster is flourishing. You will see it in a hundred ways every day, including:

- the people panhandling for spare change to survive
- the older men and women shovelling leftover casseroles from a soup kitchen into little plastic bags to take home to their rooming house or squat
- the wet sleeping bags left in a pile on a street corner
- the permanent homes erected in alleyways, on grates, in squats, parks and under bridges
- the church basements that are now open for emergency shelter, filled with people following a path of forced migration from church to church every night of the week in the winter.

There is no longer enough room in Toronto's emergency hostel system to provide safe shelter for this Disaster's victims. On many nights the City reports that the hostels are "totally full." It is dangerous and unhealthy to run any shelter system at 100%+ capacity.

However, despite the horrendous overcrowded conditions in Toronto's shelters, people are so desperate to get off the streets that during a recent rainstorm an overnight emergency shelter had to take in 126 people, far more than the 80 they are set up to handle. People were crowded elbow to elbow, some sleeping on mats, while others were left on the concrete floor. Staff had to refuse to admit anyone else and people heard pounding on the door and screaming outside.

In Toronto, the largest growing group of people suffering in this Disaster are children and families. The Report of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force, released a year ago, tells us that families make up 46% of the people using Toronto hostels in 1996. The Children's Aid Society of Toronto found that lack of adequate housing was a significant issue for almost 1 in 5 of the children coming into their care.

7. The Homelessness Disaster: In Ontario

Across Ontario, this Homeless Disaster has left a visible trail of death. October's issue of the "Mortem Post" cautions coroners in Ontario to consider homelessness as a factor as they proceed in their investigation, autopsies and inquests.

And the housing crisis looms ever larger in Ontario, bringing more and more people to the brink of homelessness and then onto the province's streets. Where's Home, the most thorough study with the latest data available on housing conditions currently available, tells us that: :

- over 300,000 tenant households in Ontario are paying more than 50% of their incomes on rent. Many tenants are at immediate risk of becoming houseless.
- in most parts of Ontario, tenant incomes are falling even as rents rise faster than inflation.
- about 16, 000 new rental units are needed annually according to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), but almost no new affordable rental housing is being built.
- in Barrie, a town representative of many in Ontario, there was a 1, 235% increase in stays at homeless shelters from 1994 to 1998.
- many, many new cities, towns and regions in the province are opening shelter, conducting studies, convening task forces including Brampton, Muskoka and Peterborough. Peel Region recently endorsed the TDRC Disaster Declaration!

8. Homelessness is Houselessness, period.

The one thing all homeless people have in common is that they are unhoused.

Ontario's homeless were all once housed, most of them adequately housed.

Today many thousands are unhoused. Half of the 5,000 people who slept in Toronto's shelters last night were families. About 1,000 were children.

Affordable housing is the key to ending homelessness and easing the housing crisis in Ontario. Research in all jurisdictions concludes that the availability of long term affordable rental housing is the solution for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

A major research initiative, taking about ten years to complete, published as "Predictors of Homelessness Among Families in New York City" (American Journal of Public Health, 1998) found, amongst other things, that regardless of the specific personal histories and/or contexts of homeless people lives, over 80% of homeless families remained housed after five years, in contrast to only 20% who did not obtain subsidized housing.

Homelessness is the fallout of the twin problems of affordability and supply. Build enough affordable housing and return to more equitable social assistance levels and you will house the vast majority of Ontario's homeless people.

9. Toronto's Housing Conditions

It is difficult for any low- or moderate-income household to find adequate, appropriate and affordable housing in Toronto.

Toronto's Rental Sector

Rent increases have been gradual but continuous over the past decade. The average rent for a two bedroom apartment, for example, has increased by 38% between 1989 and 1998 (compared to an inflation increase of 21%). The Ontario government's new landlord/tenant legislation, the abolition of controls on apartment demolition and conversion, and the decision to gut the Human Rights Code's protection from discrimination (allowing the use of minimum income criteria), means that rental housing will become even more scarce and more expensive.

Household Income Trends in Toronto

Household income among renters has not kept pace with inflation and the gap between average renter and owner household incomes continues to grow. The following household income averages are from the 1991 Census and the 1996 Census for the City of Toronto (formerly Metropolitan Toronto):

1991 Census

- owners average income, \$73,200
- renters average income, \$38,400

1996 Census

- owners average income, \$74,100
- renters average income, \$36,200

During the five years between the 1991 Census and 1996 Census average renter incomes fell by 6% while average income for owners increased by 1.3%.

Though housing consumers are divided into these two groups (owners and renters), the land and housing markets are not. There is one market for both, and owners, with the higher incomes, set the prices. The low average incomes among renters means that it is no longer economical to build new rental housing, except at the upper end of the market – though this part of the market is now mainly served by condominium apartments that are offered for rent. This is why the Ontario Government's housing policy – let the market build the rental housing we need – is a predictable failure. The market cannot build and make money in the rental sector.

Toronto's Vacancy Rates

Low vacancy rates are supposed to be the housing market signal for investors to build more rental housing. However, vacancy rates have been very low for more than two decades in Toronto. They were less than one percent through most of the 1980s, increasing to two percent in the early 1990s and then falling back again.

Vacancy Rates in the City of Toronto, 1989 to 1999
(formerly Metropolitan Toronto)

1989 0.4%

1990	0.8
1991	1.6
1992	2.0
1993	1.9
1994	1.2
1995	0.8
1996	1.1
1997	0.8
1998	0.9
1999	0.9

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Rental Housing Construction in Toronto

Most of the rental housing built over the past ten years has been social housing – municipal, private and co-operative non-profit housing subsidized by the federal and provincial governments. However, the federal government ceased funding any new social housing in 1993 and the Province of Ontario did the same in 1995. Thus, there are no longer any new social housing starts and there are very few private sector rental starts.

Rental Housing Completions in the City of Toronto, 1984 to 1998 (formerly Metropolitan Toronto)

	Private Rental	Assisted Rental	Total	Rental as % of Total
1984	2086	2279	8284	52.6%
1985	1260	1117	6170	38.5%
1986	1208	1725	7291	40.2%
1987	188	1101	6933	18.6%
1988	1409	1329	6188	44.3%

1989	1010	2193	13686	23.4%
1990	1532	1182	9939	27.3%
1991	743	1605	8779	26.8%
1992	278	2403	6370	42.1%
1993	22	5834	7168	81.7%
1994	132	2443	4106	62.7%
1995	164	1308	3077	47.8%
1996	98	1543	5790	28.3%
1997	94	861	5570	17.2%
1998	114	0	4382	2.6%

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

10. Homelessness: An ‘Un-natural’ Human-Made Public Policy Disaster

Why are there so many (or any) houseless destitute people in Ontario? Did the weather or an earthquake cause the problem? Did they all choose to move out of their houses, give up their jobs, and live on the streets?

Federal and provincial government policy has played the major role in causing the severity of the destitution we see in all of Ontario’s urban and rural communities.

The lack of affordable housing, the lack of enough money to live on, and the lack of adequate support services (for mental illness, addictions, etc.) are the factors that push impoverished individuals and households over the edge.

The Ontario Government must engage in a major reinvestment effort in affordable housing programs and related support services. This is far cheaper than the cost of emergency shelters and costly emergency services.

In 1995 the Ontario Government told us that the private sector would build the rental housing we need. Private sector rental housing starts in Ontario have averaged 857 units per year for the four years 1995 to 1998. In the previous four years the average number built per year was 2,768 (1991 to 1994). The number of private sector rental starts was even higher in the years prior to 1991.

Private Sector Rental Housing Starts in Ontario

1988	10,863	1991	5,407	1995	550
1989	9,789	1992	2,273	1996	931
1990	6,971	1993	2,023	1997	773

So, where is the market response to the Ontario Government's policy of relying on the market?

Social housing starts peaked in 1992 with 15,667 affordable non-profit housing units built by the federal and provincial governments. First the federal government stopped supplying social housing in 1993, then the Province of Ontario in 1995.

There were no social housing starts over the past three years in Ontario.

In the years from 1988 to 1994 a total of 40,183 social housing units were built – an annual average of 5,740 units.

It is government policy that has failed to provide adequate affordable housing at the very time renter household's incomes are falling in real (inflation adjusted) terms.

In 1995, the Ontario Government not only ceased funding any new social housing it cancelled commitments on 17,000 co-op and non-profit housing units that had been approved for development. At the current rate of private rental housing starts, about 850 units per year, it will take 20 years to see 17,000 rental starts in the province. And these will not likely house any low or moderate income renters.

For three years there have been zero social housing starts in Ontario. If the 1988 to 1994 average rate of social housing production of 5,740 units had been maintained, there would be additional 17,220 affordable rental units.

The Toronto Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force identified a need for a minimum of 5,000 supportive housing units in the City (1,000 per year for five years). We are now into the second year and only 40 units have been provided.

The 'leave it to the market' excuse for ending social housing provision cannot work. How long will the Ontario Government allow near zero rental starts for the 37% of the Province's households who are tenants?

11. The One Percent Solution

The single most important thing that we can all do to end homelessness in Ontario and in Canada is to implement local, provincial and national housing supply and support service strategies. At this point in time, Canada is the only industrialized country not to have a senior level government (federal/provincial) housing policy.

To fund a housing strategy the TDRC proposes the One Percent Solution -- that all levels of government spend an additional one percent of their existing total budgets on housing.

The One Percent Solution is based on a calculation of the combined spending of all levels of government -- federal, provincial, territorial and municipal. Add up the amount of money all levels of government are spending on housing and it equals about one percent of overall government spending. This money current provides a range of housing supports, including affordable housing for 650,000 households (about 5.5% of the entire country's housing stock).

The One Percent Solution calls for a doubling of this effort. That means, in simple terms, that every government needs to double what it is currently spending on housing. This can be phased in over a three to

five year period. The One Percent Solution is not based on one percent of any particular government's spending, but one percent of all governments' spending.

On average, in 1994-95, the federal, provincial and municipal governments of Canada spent \$3.83 billion out of a total of \$358 billion dollar budget on housing.

Introducing the One Percent Solution would not only substantially increase the number of housing units but would also increase the support services for people who need housing. There would be funding for new construction, renovation of existing units and subsidies for people on low incomes.

Hundreds of organizations and institutions across Canada have endorsed the One Percent Solutions and have sent letters of support to senior members of your government. They include the Canadian Housing Renewal Association (CHRA), Canadian Pensioners Concerned, Science For Peace, The Faculty of Nursing at the University of Toronto, the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, the Co-op Housing Federation of Canada and the Federal NDP Party. The outpouring of letters from individual supporters continues to be overwhelming.

Summing up, The One Percent Solution is:

- **Affordable:** The 1% Solution is affordable, at about 50 cents per tax payer per day.
- **Modest:** Set against the huge and growing need of affordable housing and services, the 1 % Solution is a modest but important proposal.
- **Mainly 'catch up' spending:** in real terms, the 1% Solution is in fact only replacing the huge amount of money cut out of housing and related programs by the federal government since 1984.
- **Funding for all three parts of the solution:** The funds would supply: (1) adequate housing, (2) adequate support services, and (3) adequate jobs, job training and social assistance – thereby ending mass homelessness in Canada.

12. Conclusion: Ontario's Homeless are not a 'Special Interest Group'

The homeless and underhoused in Ontario do not constitute a "special interest group." We are not asking for favours or charity. Adequate and affordable shelter is not a luxury. It is a basic human right that is being denied far to many people in the Province right now. You, the Ontario Government, have the means to change that. We urge you to act, and to do so immediately. It is your responsibility to address these problems and crises. No one else has the means to do so. We, the people of Ontario, through are government, have both the means and the responsibility to act now. For you do to anything else, and for us to proceed in any other context, is to misinterpret why we elect governments in the first place.

- **Implement the One Percent Solution.**
- **Build the necessary homes.**
- **Provide the necessary support services.**
- **Provide adequate income support measures.**
- **End mass homelessness in Ontario.**

Submitted on behalf of the Steering Committee of the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee
3 January 2000

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

A REPORT ON

HOME-MADE SOLUTIONS

A ONE DAY WORKSHOP ON CREATING HOUSING QUICKLY!

February 23, 2002

The one-day workshop, 'Home Made Solutions', was held on February 23, 2002 at the North Toronto Memorial Community Centre from 9.30 am to 3.30 pm. The attendance was much larger than expected - about 150 people - pointing to the tremendous interest in the issue.

The morning began with three talks on the details of homelessness: Cathy Crowe, street nurse and co-founder of the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee; Stevie Cameron, journalist and coordinator of the Out-of-the Cold Program at St. Andrew's Church; and Kathy Hardill, a street nurse at Regent Park Community Centre. They were followed by John Sewell discussing government programs to maintain homelessness but not to provide housing; Adam Vaughan, City TV reporter discussing various attempts to provide housing including Tent City; and Rainer "DRI" Driemeyer, a resident of Tent City disparaging the government's dishonest advertising that beds are available for the homeless. Sessions were punctuated by comments, questions and discussions.

At the lunch break there was the opportunity to look at and walk into the small house constructed off site and brought on a flatbed truck to the front of the community centre. The small house was designed by Architects Alliance and was built by Jaan Poldas, Henry Levy, and Jonathan Borah with Tent City labour. The house met the Building Code and contained a composting toilet, shower, kitchen and living area. At the end of the day, the house was delivered to Tent City and donated to a homeless couple who are currently living in the house.

After lunch John van Nostrand outlined ways to provide pre-fabricated housing quickly and inexpensively. The immediate short-term solution is to put temporary small houses on land (in some cases permission to use the land has not been sought). A structure's cost is \$12,500 and the cost of providing water, sanitation and energy another \$6,500, for a total of \$19,000.

A medium term solution could involve a lease on a piece of land, a permission which permits city services to be somewhat more regularized. The total capital costs would be in the order of \$22,400. Once there is a lease legitimizing the small house, social assistance could be received by the occupant and rent in the amount of \$325 per month could be paid to cover ongoing cost servicing.

A long term solution is to get a site where a fully serviced unit can be installed for a capital cost - including land - at about \$40,500. The ongoing expenses would be \$575 per month, so a rent of \$575 would mean the

operation of the small house would break even.

John van Nostrand's presentation provoked considerable discussion. The group broke into three smaller discussion groups that generated a number of different ideas about what might happen next. The ideas were noted and are now under consideration by the organizers of the workshop with a view to creating an action plan. The following are the key proposals:

1. Create a central agency to harness all those who wish to contribute money or sponsor solutions to homelessness.
2. Start creative searches for land where small houses can be located for temporary periods of time, such as parking lots, agency and church land, or vacant land. Be as open as one can about what pieces of land would be available for this kind of housing, perhaps by creating a central registry.
3. Create a building society for low-income individuals to pool their money and energy to create housing for members of the society. These kinds of building societies exist in the Caribbean and other places.
4. Consider ways in which inexpensive ownership housing can be created for households with low income.
5. Whenever a gathering or conference around housing takes place make sure activities such as building a small house occur so that the event starts to physically solve the housing shortage as well talks about it.

Please note: It has since been learned that, contrary to what had been said on February 23, there is no zoning exemption for one or two temporary dwellings on a lot - which unfortunately makes our challenges just a bit larger.

The workshop was sponsored by Christ-Church Deer Park, North Toronto Faith and Justice Group, Project Warmth, POINT (People & Organizations in North Toronto), and Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC). There was also considerable support from numerous individuals and organizations including: Adam Vaughan, Architects Alliance, Barry Burnett, Bob Fugere, Canadian Tire Store -- 2681 Danforth Store, "DRI", Capital City Rent-All, Catherine Beaton, Generation PV Inc, Henry Levy, Howard Watson, Jaan Poldas, Joan and Patti Hanlon, Jonathan Borah, Jon Alexander, John Sewell, Kathy Hardill, Lions Club of Toronto -- Beaches Branch, Pascale Gourmet, Royal Home Care, Greater Toronto Clearinghouse, Michael Giuliani, Nick van Nostrand, Stevie Cameron, Street Survivors, The Furniture Bank, The Futon Store, The North Toronto Memorial Community Centre, Tent City, Victor Willis, Village Building Supplies, and Walter Seaton.

The following presentations or background material are available on-line.

[Cathy Crowe presentation](#)

[Kathy Hardill presentation](#)

[John Sewell presentation](#)

[John van Nostrand background information](#)

For more information, please contact:

Toronto Disaster Relief Committee at 416-599-8372 or email tdrc@tdrc.net

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October 2001

State of the Disaster - Update 2001

The Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC) issued the State of Emergency declaration in October 1998, declaring homelessness a national disaster. We have articulated a political strategy to virtually eliminate homelessness, known as the One Percent Solution. This proposal requires that all levels of government increase annual spending on housing by a mere 1% of their total respective budgets. We continue to fight for this solution. However, until such time as Canada has a national housing strategy, large cities like Toronto desperately need emergency, life saving measures to deal with their homelessness crises.

One year ago, the TDRC released “State of the Disaster: Winter 2000,” which was a shocking indictment of Toronto’s shelter system, based on interviews with homeless people, shelter staff and front line workers. Two serious problems were identified: an approximately 1000 shelter bed shortfall; and an existing shelter system that is overcrowded, dangerous, and which in many cases does not meet United Nations standards for refugee camps.

Now, as we approach another winter, the homelessness disaster in Toronto looks like this: continuing high rates of infectious diseases, including TB, Hepatitis C and HIV; continued rampant and arbitrary barrings from shelters; the clearing out by police of homeless people from the downtown parks, to which they have been forced, because shelters are full; a population explosion of homeless people living in makeshift encampments and shanty towns. This year, instead of trying to move indoors for the winter, many people are trying to prepare their shacks and tents to withstand the winter weather. They know that it will be virtually impossible to find safe shelter in the system.

Since our last State of the Disaster report in October 2000, we have recorded the deaths of 39 more homeless people. At the end of September, yet another of those deaths was the brutal homicide of Bill West, a homeless man who had no safe place to live. This report evaluates the progress made by the City of Toronto in dealing with its homelessness disaster over the past year. It is a shameful litany of denial and inaction. We reiterate our call for these recommendations to be implemented immediately.

- 1) Order a moratorium on shelter closures for the duration of the disaster NOT SUPPORTED.
- 2) Open four dormitory style facilities, which should be run by an aid organization such as the Red Cross, as emergency shelter/warming centers. These facilities should be able to accommodate up to 150 men, women and couples, and should be available for the duration of the disaster. NOT SUPPORTED.
- 3) Open a number of appropriate shelter facilities (for example, which are smaller, more private, with increased supports on site) to meet the needs of women, people with disabilities, aboriginal people, youth, people with serious addictions or health/mental health problems, and people living with AIDS, to make up the remaining 400 beds required. Included in these beds should be at least one “wet hostel” for women and other harm reduction facilities to meet the needs of people in the above groups with addictions. NOT SUPPORTED. City Council approved 1000 more beds over 3 years. These beds were cancelled during the budget approval process.
- 4) Ensure that the above facilities and existing facilities meet the United Nations Standards for refugee camps as well as established North American disaster relief standards. For example, an adequate number of toilets must be accessible; beds or cots versus mats on the floor must be provided; adequate space allocation must be provided; food provided must meet nutritional needs; health services should be

provided on site. UNITED NATIONS STANDARDS NOT MET IN MANY SHELTERS.

- 5) Ensure that the above facilities and existing facilities operate from a harm reduction philosophy. There must be adequate staffing levels and adequate staff training with respect to mental health issues, harm reduction and crisis de-escalation to ensure both safety and the meeting of standards. THERE ARE STILL VERY FEW HARM REDUCTION BEDS IN THE SYSTEM.
- 6) Direct the Manager of Hostel Services to develop a policy on barrings for all city-funded shelters. In particular, barring must be reserved for extreme cases of violence and, in the event that someone is barred, alternate shelter must be found. The policy must include a consistent barring protocol and clear appeal process and should be posted in every shelter. NOT DONE. A review of Hostel Standards, including barring, will not be completed until spring 2002 at the earliest.
- 7) Direct the Medical Officer of Health to carry out a special investigation of health standards in the shelter system to ensure that they meet international public health standards. If necessary, Hostel Services must fund any identified deficiencies. NOT DONE. The Public Health Department will participate in the Hostel Standards review; will not be completed until spring 2002.
- 8) Direct the General Manager of Social Services to develop a policy to ensure that all people using the shelter system, including the Out of the Cold Program, have access to the Personal Needs Allowance stipend. NOT DONE. Shelter, Housing and Support Division to review the benefits provided and report to Community Services Committee fall of 2001.
- 9) Develop a voucher system so that, until such time as sufficient shelter space is made available, homeless people can be sheltered in motels or hotels. NOT SUPPORTED.
- 10) Direct the Medical Officer of Health to develop and implement a strategy for ensuring sufficient access for homeless people to public toilets. NO STRATEGY MADE PUBLIC NOR IMPLEMENTED.

MEMORIAL LIST

OCTOBER 2000 - OCTOBER 2001

Mike Laracy
Peter Lelie
Roseanne Brouillard
Walter Later
Greg Coyen
Barry Proctor
Abdul Dewani
John Dunn
Robert MacDonald
Ronald Back
Jane Doe
Mervyn
Donald "Dusty" Fiske
Daniel Genge
A.B.
N.B.
Jozsef Theobold
John Doe
Francis "Frank" Lewis

Doug Taylor
Barry “Kermit” Gostlin
Archie McIsaac
Lynn Jean-Marie
Peter Chegahno
Edwin Hawthorne
Gary Blackburn
Charles Cameron
Jane Doe
Leonard McClaren
John Doe
John Doe
John Doe
John Doe
Steve Lovell
Trevor Littlejohn
Tim Hoffman
Willie Wilson
C. D.
Bill West

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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2000

Tell Ottawa: We want real MONEY for a real National HOUSING Strategy

[Click here](#) to use our easy form to [send a message](#) to the Prime Minister.

The federal government cut all spending on new social housing (nonprofit and co-op homes) in 1993. With no new affordable housing, it's no surprise that eight years later, Canada is facing a nationwide homelessness disaster and housing crisis.

During the recent election, the Liberals promised to restore \$170 million in federal housing spending to create up to 30,000 new homes every year for four years. Three of the four other national political parties also support new housing funding. They are the Bloc Québécois, New Democratic Party and Progressive Conservatives.

We're glad that politicians have started to talk about restoring housing funding. Now we need action - no later than the next federal budget, which is expected in February. The National Housing and Homelessness Network is calling on Ottawa to commit about \$2 billion in new spending on housing and related services every year.

We call this the One Percent Solution. We are asking you to join in our national campaign. Help us to deliver a clear message to Ottawa: **"We want real money for a real national housing strategy"**.

1. Housing and homelessness: a snapshot Every year, 200,000 or more Canadians experience homelessness. Not just in big cities, but also small towns, rural and remote areas. Aboriginal people face high levels of homelessness.

The fastest growing group of homeless are families and children. In 1998, the Big City Mayor's Caucus of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities declared that homelessness is a National Disaster, at the urging of housing advocates.

Homelessness is the visible tip of an even bigger problem: a nationwide housing crisis. The latest federal figures show that about 1.7 million poor households are on the brink of homelessness. That's more than 4.5 million women, men and children who are just one short step away from the street.

In most parts of the country, they face two hurdles: supply and affordability. Not enough housing and housing that is too expensive. For more information on homelessness and housing, log onto the "resources" library of the Housing Again Web site at www.housingagain.web.net.

2. Restore funding for a national housing strategy In 1973, the federal government launched a national housing strategy. "Good housing at reasonable cost is a social right of every citizen of this country... This must be our objective, our obligation, and our goal," said Ottawa.

In the early 1980s, the federal government was funding up to 30,000 new homes every year. But Ottawa stopped all funding for new affordable housing in 1993. Canada's national housing strategy from 1973 to 1993 was very successful. Ottawa, in partnership with community-based, nonprofit and co-op housing

providers, built hundreds of thousands of good quality, affordable housing units that continue to provide good homes to this day.

In 1996, the federal government announced plans to transfer existing federal housing programs to the provinces and territories. Housing co-ops fought, and won, their fight to remain at the federal level. McGill Professor Jeanne M. Wolfe, in an 1998 article in the international housing journal, *Housing Studies*, wrote: "However, it is only in Canada that the national government has, except for CMHC loans, withdrawn from the social housing field.

The rush to get out of the responsibility for managing existing projects and building new, low-income housing has taken advocates by surprise. It was never imagined that a system that had taken 50 years to buildup could be dismantled so rapidly. Social housing policy in Canada now consists of a checkerboard of 12 provincial and territorial policies, and innumerable local policies.

Now that four of the five national political parties support new housing funding, the momentum is starting to swing back. Here are key parts of a national housing strategy:

Federal funding:

About \$2 billion is needed every year. The scale of funding has to match the scale of the need. The \$170 million promised by the Liberals is not enough. Even if Ottawa spends \$20 billion over ten years, as most advocates are asking, the housing crisis will only be cut in half. **But \$2 billion annually - the "One Percent Solution" - is a solid goal.**

And it's affordable. This year, the federal surplus could be \$20 billion. Five weeks of the surplus will buy an entire year of housing spending.

Flexible administration:

A new national housing strategy has to meet the social, and political, realities of Canada. The federal Liberal plan depends on cost-sharing with provinces and territories. Canada has had successful housing programs in the past in which the costs were shared by two levels of government.

Provinces, such as Quebec, can take federal dollars, roll them into provincial programs and produce even more housing. But there are other provinces and territories that either can't afford to match federal dollars, or won't match them.

A national housing strategy that depends on provincial cooperation and provincial dollars won't reach many parts of Canada. Desperately needed new housing will be delayed by jurisdictional squabbling. A new national housing strategy must be flexible: cost-shared with those provinces and territories that are willing, and other arrangements in the rest of Canada.

In those places, Ottawa can flow dollars to municipalities or non-governmental housing administrators.

Program design:

Ottawa says that it doesn't want to get back into administration of housing programs. Okay. There are plenty of other ways to get federal dollars into new housing. The National Housing Policy Options Paper of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has proposals for action.

So do other national housing groups. With Canada's record of success in housing programs, and lots of expertise among municipalities and community-based housing providers, program design is an

administrative detail that shouldn't delay the commitment of \$2 billion in new spending.

3. Tips for action in your community:

Here are five practical actions that you can take:

i) [Click here](#) to use our easy form to [send a message](#) to the Prime Minister.

ii) Phone, fax, e-mail, write - or best of all - meet with your Member of Parliament (MP). Look in the blue pages of your telephone directory for contact information.

You can write to your MP (and the Prime Minister and Finance Minister) at: < name of MP >, House of Commons, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6. No postage is required.

iii) Phone, fax, e-mail or write Prime Minister Jean Chretien and Finance Minister Paul Martin. Fax the PM at 613-941-6900. Fax Minister Martin at 613-992-4291.

iv) Speak out for housing in your community. Talk to your neighbours, your coworkers, your union, your church or faith community. Set up a forum in a local school or community centre and invite some speakers. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Write an article for a church bulletin or community newspaper.

v) Join a coalition on housing and homelessness in your community, or start your own. Work together with other concerned people in your area. Letter-writing and meetings with politicians can have a big impact, especially if enough people join in the campaign. Contact your MP, even if they are a member of the Alliance, the only national party that isn't committed to new housing funding.

Alliance MPs say that they will act on the views of their constituents. A few tips for your letter, or meeting:

- Introduce yourself. Say why you are concerned about the homeless disaster. If you have a personal connection (a friend, a relative, perhaps even yourself), mention it.
- Demand that the next federal budget include \$2 billion for new social housing. Mention the One Percent Solution.
- Make sure to ask your MP, the PM or Finance Minister to act on your concerns and reply to you in writing. Ask your MP to communicate directly with the PM and Finance Minister and send you a copy of their letter.

This document is prepared by the National Housing and Homelessness Network (NHHN). We are a nationwide network of community-based housing and homeless advocates, formed in March of 1999. For more information on housing and homelessness, contact TDRC (the secretariat for NHHN) at tdrc@tdrc.net

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March 21, 2000

AN OPEN LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER CHRETIEN

Prime Minister Jean Chretien, House of Commons, Ottawa

Once again, a homeless person has died in Toronto. Jennifer Caldwell, 20-years-old, died violently when a fire roared through her makeshift shelter near downtown Toronto. While she died alone, her death is one of a growing number of homeless people in Toronto.

Recent studies show that as many as two to four homeless people are dying every week. We are bringing to your office some burned articles, including part of her blanket and sleeping bag. Thousands of sleeping bags, blankets and articles of clothing are donated every winter to homeless people to make their lives more comfortable, but these acts of charity are no substitute for a national housing program.

Two decades ago, the federal government funded as many as 30,000 new units of social housing annually. But, in 1993 the federal government stopped funding for new housing. In March of last year, the United Nation's Human Rights Committee reviewed Canada's compliance with Article 6(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which reads: "Every human being has the inherent right to life.

This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life." The U.N. condemned Canada's failure to take action in the housing crisis. Today, the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee, the Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain, the Ottawa Alliance to End Homelessness and the National Housing and Homelessness Network held a vigil at the Human Rights Memorial in Ottawa and issued a call to your government to take action.

The Prime Minister's Office is seen by the public as responsible for the health and well-being of its citizens. The public, in its grief, shock and outrage, looks to you, Prime Minister, for empathy and solutions. We call on you today to make an immediate public statement condemning the homelessness disaster and housing crisis in Ontario, Quebec and the rest of Canada.

We urge you to take immediate action to fund a new national social housing program. On December 17th, your government announced a new homelessness strategy including an allocation of \$750 million over three years. Ministers Bradshaw and Gagliano, in making the announcement, called it the "first step".

The next step is a fully-funded national housing program. In the name and memory of Jennifer Caldwell and the many others who have died on the streets of Toronto, Ottawa and many other cities, please take that step right away.

Sincerely,
Cathy Crowe, on behalf of TDRC and our allies

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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Paul Martin's Solution to Canada's Housing Problems

[Martin Needs to Heed the Homeless: Finance Minister Should Recall Own Words From Past](#), *Toronto Star*, February 2000

["Housing Blueprint Moulders in the Archives," David Hulchanski, Toronto Star, October 7, 1998.](#)

["Housing: The Cause of and... a Potential Solution to Poverty in Canada,"](#) Chapter 3 of Paul Martin and Joe Fontana, *Finding Room: Housing Solutions for the Future, Report of the National Liberal Caucus Task Force on Housing*, Ottawa, 1990.

The Toronto Star

Friday, February 25, 2000

MARTIN NEEDS TO HEED THE HOMELESS: FINANCE MINISTER SHOULD RECALL OWN WORDS FROM PAST

by Cathy Crowe, Kira Heineck, David Hulchanski and Michael Shapcott

Many eyes will be on Finance Minister Paul Martin as he rises in the House of Commons on Monday to deliver the federal budget. But few will look with more intensity than will homeless people and their advocates.

The reason? There is a disturbing new trend in Canada's homelessness disaster. Hostels for the homeless are opening palliative-care facilities to help an increasing number of homeless people die with some measure of dignity.

The latest to open a place for the dying is an Ottawa hostel, which provides shelter beds for 135 men, with another 20 crowded onto mats on the floor. Ten homeless people died in this shelter during 1999, prompting workers to open a special unit to care for the dying.

In Toronto, a downtown hospital provides palliative services to shelter residents. Death is no stranger to the homeless.

Stephen Hwang, a University of Toronto professor of medicine and epidemiologist at the F.K. Morrow Inner City Health Research Unit of St. Michael's Hospital, tracked 9,000 homeless men from 1995 to 1997. He identified more than 200 deaths - about three deaths every two weeks.

Since homeless men represent fewer than half of those using shelters, and there are more homeless people today, Hwang concluded: "These numbers would be expected to be higher today."

As Martin rises in the Commons, Canadians should ask themselves:

Why is this human crisis of homelessness not treated in the same way as other crises in which people lose their housing and have their lives disrupted? For example, the icestorm in eastern Canada or the Manitoba

flood?

Why are governments not responding to the physical and mental harm, including death, caused by being homeless?

Why are they ignoring the spread of diseases, such as tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and hepatitis?

Why is it that our public officials fail to recognize that tens of thousands of people without housing, adequate food and health care constitute one of the largest and most serious national disasters that Canada has ever faced?

Homelessness is the most visible manifestation of a bigger problem: a nation-wide housing crisis among lower-income Canadians.

At a time when economists say Canada is witnessing strong economic growth, a growing number of households are caught in a vicious squeeze between rising rents and falling incomes.

There is a dwindling supply of affordable housing and growing need. In Toronto alone, hundreds of people are evicted every week because they can't afford to pay the rent. Across Canada, more than 830,000 tenants (that's at least 2.2 million women, men and children) are paying more than half their income on rent, putting them dangerously close to the streets.

None of this is news to Martin.

Ten years ago, as housing critic for the then opposition Liberals, he produced a detailed blueprint for a national housing strategy.

Here's what he said in 1990: "Canada is presently confronted with a major housing crisis . . . The federal government has abandoned its responsibilities with regards to housing problems.

. . . "The housing crisis is growing at an alarming rate and the government sits there and does nothing; it refuses to apply the urgent measures that are required to reverse this deteriorating situation."

On the role of the federal government, Martin concluded that "leadership must come from one source; and a national vision requires some national direction."

Is there anything wrong with the logic of his argument 10 years later? If our federal government does not respond to this national crisis, who will? In December of last year, the federal government announced it would spend \$753 million over three years on a homelessness strategy.

Claudette Bradshaw, federal minister responsible for the homeless, and federal Housing Minister Alfonso Gagliano called it a "first step."

Almost all the money will help to improve shelters and services for people who are already homeless. Some of the homeless will be more comfortable, but they won't be any less homeless. There will also be more homeless Canadians.

Homeless people and their advocates are looking to Martin to take the next step: a national housing strategy. A massive investment is needed to deal with the massive crisis sweeping our country.

The so-called "One Percent Solution," calls on the federal government to invest \$2 billion a year in new housing and services for the homeless. It's a modest investment, when set against the deaths and devastation of homelessness.

For that amount, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) estimates that 20,000 households could find new homes, another 10,000 could see their substandard housing repaired and an additional 40,000 households would get subsidies to help them afford the rent. The federation wants the federal government to help 70,000 households a year for an entire decade.

On Monday, will Martin deliver a truly comprehensive housing strategy or simply offer cold words of comfort to the nation's homeless population?

- Cathy Crowe is a street nurse working with homeless people.
- Kira Heineck is co-ordinator of the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee.
- David Hulchanski is a professor of social work at the University of Toronto.
- Michael Shapcott is a long-time advocate for affordable housing and the homeless.

From *TORONTO STAR*, Wednesday, October 7, 1998 p.A27

Housing Blueprint Moulders in the Archives

by J. David Hulchanski

Imagine for a moment that Canada had a national plan for addressing its growing housing problems.

It would assert the human right to adequate housing, recognize the plight of Canada's homeless population, comment on the urban and rural living conditions of our aboriginal people, analyze the lack of new affordable rental housing and its effect on tenants, and describe the difficulties of low-income homeowners.

It would state firmly that "the federal role in housing must not be a residual one" because the "connection between housing and other aspects of both social and economic policy means that the federal government must take a lead role."

It would declare that "affordable housing has become an increasingly unattainable goal for too many segments of our population."

It would acknowledge that our "market housing system has not responded adequately to all of society's needs," that "all Canadians have the right to decent housing, in decent surroundings, at affordable prices," and that there "is currently a vacuum in federal policy and direction."

It would make a number - let's say 25 - of specific recommendations.

It would demand that the federal government be the "vigorous leader of [these] comprehensive efforts" because "only the national government has the financial resources to address the full dimensions of the needs of this country."

There is no need to imagine it. It exists already, in a 50-page national housing blueprint written by Paul Martin - yes, that Paul Martin, our minister of finance - and MP Joe Fontana. It is called Finding Room: Housing Solutions for the Future, Report of the National Liberal Caucus Task Force on Housing.

It was released after extensive national consultation in May 1990. Its analysis and 25 recommendations form

an excellent basis for a comprehensive national housing strategy.

In it, Martin complains that "the primary goal of Conservative housing policy has been to cut the deficit" and that "the Conservative government is unable or unwilling to address the issue in a meaningful fashion."

Yet within a few months of taking office, the Liberal government withdrew completely from its role in social housing, making Canada the only Western nation - perhaps the only nation anywhere - to do so.

At about the same time, the United Nations condemned Canada for failing to address poverty and housing problems in a 1993 report on Canada's compliance with the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Canada had signed and agreed to implement this covenant in 1976.

Worse yet, the Liberal government began in earnest to pass to the provinces and territories full responsibility for the existing stock of social housing, directly contradicting the recommendations of its own pre-election housing task force.

Canada's housing problems are now much worse than they were in 1993. The indicators are easy to catalogue. There is virtually no new private-sector rental housing construction in the country. Only a couple of provinces build a few social housing units each year. The real income of renters has fallen dramatically during the 1990s.

The result? More and more homeless people. Young people and young families are filling emergency shelters. Women with children now make up about 40% of Toronto's emergency shelter users. About 5,000 individual children use Toronto's emergency shelters each year.

Adequate housing and housing-related support services for all Canadians are well within our nation's financial means. The combined annual spending on housing assistance by all levels of government in Canada is about 1% of their budgets. Spending another 1% would not affect the well-being of taxpaying Canadians.

The scope and scale of homelessness is a national health, housing and human rights disaster. Our nation's housing problems are the predictable result of private and public sector policies. We can and must reverse the trend.

The process can only start, as Mr. Martin noted eight years ago, with a commitment by the national government. Let's dust off those copies of *Finding Room: Housing Solutions for the Future*. We could begin by implementing recommendation #14, which requires the federal government to "convene at the earliest possible date, a National Housing Forum to discuss the development of a national housing policy and related strategies ... aimed at alleviating the housing crisis in Canada."

David Hulchanski is a professor of housing and community development at the University of Toronto and a member of the board of directors of Raising the Roof: Solutions for Canada's Homeless.

Paul Martin and Joe Fontana

Finding Room: Housing Solutions for the Future ***Report of the National Liberal Caucus Task Force on Housing***

Ottawa, 1990. From Chapter 3 (pages 12 to 24)

HOUSING: The Cause of and... a Potential Solution to Poverty in Canada

"For most of us Canadians, life without a home is almost beyond imagining. What you have essentially is

what you can carry in your Sobey's bag... it reduces them to another level of existence. Everyday the homeless need to find-a way to put food in their bellies or survive another night. They are regularly assaulted and if you are young, regularly raped. They are utterly and completely alone, vulnerable, powerless. They are nobodies -- they are nameless --voiceless. What you and I should imagine is what it would be like to lose absolutely everything, so that you do not even have someone to call up." Father Peter McKenna, SCJ Hope Cottage, Halifax, Nova Scotia, October 5, 1989

Homelessness is only the most visible manifestation of Canada's housing crisis. Though homelessness affects a relative small percentage of Canadians, it is a reality which is symptomatic of a broader crisis in the supply of affordable housing. More than a million households low-income families the working poor, single-parent families, minorities and the elderly -- and special needs groups -- ex-psychiatric patients, ex-offenders, the physically and mentally handicapped, substance abusers, youth and battered women -- suffer affordability and sub-standard housing problems. The Task Force was told that though affordable housing is in desperately short supply across the country, the major contributing factor to the current crisis is poverty. Substandard housing is often the most visible result of poverty in Canada. Millions of Canadians live in poverty and struggle from month to month simply to pay the rent Homeownership for low- and moderate-income Canadian families has become a fanciful dream.

The following remarks were echoed across the country. "The main cause of the housing crisis in Canada is poverty. Poor Canadians are forced to choose between paying the rent and feeding their family. The firstline of attack on the housing problem is assuring a decent income for all Canadians. The second is a much stronger government commitment to increasing the supply of low-cost housing." Mr. Terrence Hunsley, Executive Director Canadian Council on Social Development, Ottawa, October 16, 1989

The scars of poverty cut particularly deeply into children; poor kids do not have the opportunity to play minor hockey, join the community swimming club or take tennis and piano lessons. In Canadian society, a home allows for the development of family life and full integration into the life of a community. Poverty breeds insecurity, despair and frustration, in addition to a host of other social ills. In Winnipeg, the Task Force was told: "The stock is old, community services and amenities are lacking, affordability and crowding problems are common and the environment has little to provide the quality of life necessary to reduce other problems such as crime, drug abuse, child abuse and alienation often associated with areas of poor housing... Providing better housing will not automatically eliminate these problems. However, an adequate housing environment will certainly help families cope with the poverty and alienation they often face."

Dr. Tom Carter
Institute of Urban Affairs, university of Winnipeg
Winnipeg, Manitoba, September 6, 1989

A large proportion of family income goes towards housing costs; more so for the poor. Poor people have little choice with respect to housing. They are forced to stay in inadequate housing or to accept whatever is available. Provincial social assistance levels and minimum wages are not high enough to pull individuals and families out of poverty, thus allowing the luxury of choice in the housing market. Both sources of income are particularly inadequate for those who rent in the private market. A study of Ontario social assistance recipients in 1987 found that 90 percent of those who rent in private markets paid rents in excess of the implied shelter component of allowances. This figure stands in stark contrast to that of social assistance recipients living in social housing in comparable situations; just five percent are forced to pay rents in excess of their shelter allowances.

The increasing numbers of people dependent upon food banks in major urban centres -- 180 communities in Canada have food banks -- is directly linked to the high cost of shelter. In a special report, *The Kids Are Hungry*, released in March, 1989, the Daily Bread Food Bank of Toronto estimates that 72,000 children and

their families in the Metro area found it necessary to use food banks at least three times in the previous year. As a result, one in seven children in Toronto can be said to come from a "food bank family". The report also found that 59 percent of these children live in private rental housing and most of their families pay more than they can afford for rent. The report concludes that, "the growing cost of rental accommodation is of the prime causes of this situation. Families with young children appear to be among those most severely affected."

In-November of last year, the Canadian Association of Food Banks released a report entitled, *Canadian Hungercount 1989*. The report found that 378,000 different people per month use food banks in this country; 151,000 or 40 percent of the food recipients are children. On an annual basis, *Hungercount* estimates that 1.4 million Canadians including 566,000 children use food banks. The report also found that 72 percent of those forced to use food banks receive provincial or municipal social assistance. Another 15 percent of food bank recipients depend upon unemployment insurance, old age pensions and disability pensions for their income. Among several conclusions, the report states: The consistency of need for food relief across the country shows that hunger should be regarded as a serious national health, social and economic problem... Children are at a disproportionate risk of hunger, a fact which is compounded by their vulnerability to the health implications of that condition.

Poor housing is a threat to health and the quality of life that most Canadians take for granted, particularly among children and senior citizens. The link between housing and health status has been well established. In a review of community-based literature on health inequities, the National Anti-Poverty Organization reported that: "almost all poor people are likely to live in homes that cost too much and that threaten their health. Incomes from social assistance, minimum wage or part-time jobs, or social insurance programs, are not high enough to let families rent apartments that are adequate... Poor cooking and bathing facilities make it difficult or impossible for families to care for their health. The neighbourhoods that do have affordable housing often have a lot of street traffic, pollution and crime. They often don't have space for children to play. These factors lead to accidents, stress, illness and violence."

Professor Alex Murray of York University pointed out to the Task Force that while the vast majority of poor Canadians live in private rental units, the federal focus is exclusively on non-profit and co-operative forms of housing. In addition, the Task Force was told by representatives of the building industry from every part of the country that private rental construction was, in many cases, no longer viable. In many respects, the housing crisis is a crisis of the private rental sector. Federal policies must be developed to ensure that small private landlords can continue to operate in the marketplace. Professor David Hulchanski, Director of the Centre for Human Settlements at the University of British Columbia told the Task Force bluntly that the private rental market in Vancouver had moved beyond the crisis point. In notes presented to the Task Force, Professor Hulchanski states: "The problem is not a lack of demand -- there is plenty of demand for rental units. It is a lack of effective market demand: tenants simply cannot or will not pay the rents required to make private supply of rental stock economical... In sum, there is very little reason for believing or hoping that unsubsidized private sector supply of rental units will be viable again. There is market failure in the private rental sector." Consistent with the shortage of affordable housing in the private market, the demand for social housing far exceeds the supply. Clearly then, any solutions must address both social housing and the need to revitalize the private rental market. As well, it is not enough to say that the solution lies only in the construction of new affordable units. Individuals and families need assistance now and cannot wait the several years which would be necessary to construct the number of units which are required.

A solution cannot be reached without first examining the effects of inadequate income. There is strong statistical and anecdotal evidence that an individual's quality of life is largely determined by one's housing situation. The Task Force has found direct and indirect linkages between the adequacy and affordability of housing and factors such as poor health, hunger, chronic unemployment and educational levels of attainment. Throughout this century, successive governments have attempted to deal with these problems through a

myriad of social programs. Great strides have been made in the battle against poverty and unequal access to medical care and equal opportunities in the workplace. But a significant number of Canadians continue to find the deck stacked against them

While convinced that the present social safety net must be maintained and improved, the Task Force believes that as a new century dawns, the federal government should re-evaluate the efficiency and efficacy of the present safety net, in the context of rapidly changing social and economic conditions. An argument can be made that once an individuals' or families' housing situation has been stabilized, many other problems lend themselves to easier solutions. For instance, a stable home. life is conducive to a childs' regular attendance at school and that childs' concentration on their studies. A stable home would open up-new employment opportunities as energies previously devoted to keeping body and soul together can be channeled into the workplace. Stable homes build solid communities and improve the quality of life for all Canadians. Programs such as education, training and social assistance are meaningless without adequate housing. In many provinces, an individual cannot receive social assistance without a fixed address. It is ridiculous to assume that an individual can retrain for a new job if three-quarters of their income is going rent and there is not enough left over to ensure a proper diet. In this context, the time has arrived to make housing the cornerstone of federal social policy in this country. This is not to suggest that the federal government abandon its traditional commitment to the poor, the sick and the elderly. Rather, it is a recognition of the positive impact the provision of affordable housing can have on the quality of life, in the broadest sense for a family which currently lacks such security. "The fact that the cost of housing is outpacing incomes, particularly in Canada's urban centres is a serious public policy problem and is having serious ramifications on thousands of families and individuals lacking the security of a home they can afford. It is too big a problem to be solved through housing. programs alone."

Mr. Bob Player, President
Canadian Housing and Renewal Association
Ottawa, October 16, 1989

The Task Force recognizes that increased incomes alone will not solve the housing crisis. But in the short term, additional income will afford families and individuals greater choice in housing markets and alleviate the cash squeeze which necessitates visits to food banks and soup kitchens. Indeed, this has been the experience to some degree in Ontario in the wake of social assistance reforms in the past year which have increased the level of benefits. While outside the normal purview of the Task Force, this issue is not one that can be ignored. In addition, the Task Force is reluctant to recommend policy actions which financially affect other levels of government. Again, this matter cannot be ignored. The Task Force believes that the government must pursue two avenues of income security reform: the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), and a new program of income supplementation for the working poor. The CAP ceilings announced in the 1990 Budget reflect a callous and indifferent attitude towards the poor of this country and towards the vital need for social assistance reform in Canada. This ceiling will effectively limit the extent of reform in those provinces directly affected and sends a negative signal to other provinces contemplating reforms.

RECOMMENDATION

The Task Force urges the conservative government to lift the CAP ceilings announced in the 1990 Budget. Further, that negotiations be initiated with the provinces, in the context of CAP, to increase the implicit shelter component of provincial social assistance allowances. At the same time, it is imperative that federal attention be turned as well to the needs of the working poor. More than half of all poor families in Canada are headed by a parent who works at least part of the year. Yet there are no programs which provide incentives to work. Ironically, welfare recipients who take a job are often financially worse off as a result, due to the loss of various benefits.

RECOMMENDATION

The Task Force recommends that the Conservative government initiate consultations and negotiations with the provinces to establish a new social program which provides an income supplement for workers whose earnings from employment leaves them below the poverty line. This program should: be built upon existing provincial income supplementation programs; be national in scope and cost-shared by federal and provincial governments; support the work ethic; vary the amount of supplement depending on the number of children in the family; and complement existing social programs and initiatives recommended by this report.

Homelessness is a complex, multi-causality social issue. The Task Force was told that the travails the homeless endure are "the product of prosperity". The homeless in Canada come from all social and economic backgrounds and suffer a host of problems including mental illness, physical disabilities and other health problems. Many of the homeless require not only a stable home but also varying levels of support services. The stereotypical homeless individual is the middle-aged alcoholic male. The reports that the Task Force received from those on the front lines shattered this perception. Increasing numbers of young people are becoming homeless as they flee physical or sexual abuse in the family home. The Task Force was particularly troubled by the plight of homeless women, who are subjected to abuse and violence on the streets as violent as the situation they have escaped but have precious few places to turn to for help. A federal policy response must recognize the different groups among the homeless and the factors which contribute to homelessness such as; reduced federal housing subsidies and the NIMBY syndrome which hampers the development of affordable housing and special needs housing; and neighbourhood gentrification.

Many of the recommendations proposed in this report will substantially improve the supply of affordable housing in Canada and thus, address the housing side of homelessness. It is vital though that the federal government recognize that four walls and a roof do not constitute a home. The Task Force believes that permanent housing must be the ultimate goal but recognizes that temporary shelters and transitional housing units are urgently required. Solutions must be framed in the context of achieving independence and integration for the individual. It is necessary then that the problems of the homeless be addressed in a broad, comprehensive fashion which incorporates a range of community support services.

RECOMMENDATION

The Task Force recommends that the Conservative government immediately convene a National Conference on the Homeless with participation from all levels of government, the non-profit sector and the private sector to set real objectives and policy responses for the eradication of homelessness in Canada. It is vital that the homeless play a significant role in this process. As well, the federal government must initiate discussions with provincial Ministries of Health and/or Community and Social Services to ensure that the immediate and long-term needs of the homeless are addressed.

The goals of decent, affordable housing cannot be achieved by any sector acting alone. Housing and shelter are considered in Canada to be fundamental to people's social well being and therefore, are the responsibility of both the public and private sector. Federal housing policies must recognize that the market will not provide for all the housing needs of Canadians. In designing programs to meet the needs of disadvantaged Canadians, it is vital that the non-profit sector not be seen as a threat to the private sector.

The federal role in housing must not be a residual one. The connection between housing and other aspects of both social and economic policy means that the federal government must take a lead role. Only the federal government has the power to equalize access to housing. If this responsibility is to be taken seriously, then a wide range of policy instruments are required. The Task Force does not believe that the federal response to the housing crisis can be compartmentalized into distinct solutions pertaining to housing, health or income security.

The Task Force heard condemnations of Conservative housing budget cuts from coast to coast. Particularly devastated were those representing the co-operative housing movement and representatives of municipal governments concerned about cuts to the Rental RRAP in the 1989 Budget. The Conservative housing record since 1984 can politely be termed one of quiet strangulation. The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association has provided figures to the Task Force which show that from 1980 to 1984, federal housing expenditures represented, on average, 1.68 percent of the annual federal budget. Under the Conservatives, this figure has shrunk to an annual average of 1.37 percent of federal expenditures -- a difference of 0.31 percent. This represents more than \$400 million in annual expenditures. The 1989 cuts to Rental RRAP threaten the marginal housing available to thousands of low-income individuals. Cuts to the Federal Co-operative Housing Program in the same Budget threatened in the words of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Nova Scotia, to wipe out the co-operative housing program" in that province. Cuts totaling \$165 million over the next five years in CMHC's social housing funds announced in the February, 1990 Budget will further hobble the non-profit sector in Canada. The Liberal Election Platform of 1988 contained a pledge to increase the production of non-profit housing to a level of 40,000 units annually. This objective must be met if all Canadians are to be adequately housed.

RECOMMENDATION

The Task Force recommends that the conservative government reinstate the funds cut in April, 1989 from the rental component of the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program. In addition, new guidelines must be presented to ensure that the mandate of this program is unquestionably to assist in the provision of affordable rental accommodations for needy Canadians, "I have been seeing more and more disabled people having to turn to family or service clubs (Lions, Kinsmen, etc.) in order to make home modifications for a disabled family member. This is directly related to the fact that many people currently fall into the gap where they are not eligible for assistance, yet they are not able to afford renovation costs. A well thought out program could assist in integrating more and more disabled people into the community. The focus on integration as opposed to institutionalization is widely accepted as a healthy way to improve the quality of life of disabled people as well as improve the public's perception of disabled people."

Greg Winmill, Canadian Paraplegic Association
Winnipeg, Manitoba, September 6, 1989

Disabled persons often experience great difficulties in finding adequate housing in the private market. The Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program for disabled persons is an attempt to help individuals renovate their own homes to ensure accessibility. At the present time, RRAP for the disabled provides up to \$10,000 including a forgivable loan for up to \$5,000 for such renovations. Disabled homeowners are eligible for assistance in the form of partial loan forgiveness if their gross family income falls below \$33,000; if gross family income is less than \$13,000 annually, the loan is forgiven in total.

The Task Force believes that the financial parameters of this program are totally unrealistic. Obviously the maximum assistance level will hardly provide for the construction of an entrance ramp, the widening of a few doors and the relocation of some electrical fixtures. This level of funding will not allow for the construction of an additional bedroom or washroom. As well, the program does not allow for new construction. Finally, the gross family income ceiling is ridiculously low and effectively eliminates disabled homeowners in most Canadian urban areas. If Canadians truly support full integration of the disabled into all aspects of community life, the program criteria must be improved.

RECOMMENDATION

The Task Force recommends that the Conservative government immediately commence a review of the disabled persons component of the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program with a view to improving

accessibility criteria. Further, that CMHC examine the feasibility of basing assistance upon the individual's degree of disability as opposed to a strict definition of income, within reason. The Task Force heard impassioned presentations from co-operative housing advocates and residents from Vancouver to Halifax. The co-operative housing movement is a vital component in the quest to ensure decent affordable housing with security of tenure for all Canadians. Yet, the conservative government has never allowed the Federal Co-operative Housing Program to reach its full potential. In spite of a promised commitment of 5,000 units in 1986, this objective has never been attained. In 1989, federal commitments resulted in the construction of less than 2,100 new units. While spared further cuts in the 1990 Budget, the entire federal commitment is currently under review. The Task Force is convinced that this housing option works and provides low- and moderate-income Canadians with a tremendous alternative to traditional forms of social housing and the private market. The co-operative housing community truly represents one of the finest examples of Canadians working together to achieve common goals in the improvement of their own living conditions, those of their fellow citizens and indeed, of their communities.

RECOMMENDATION

The Task Force recommends that funding for the Federal Co-operative Housing program and the Rent Supplement Program be increased to allow for the construction of 5,000 new co-operative housing units annually. Further, it is suggested that a formal consultative mechanism be established with the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada with respect to the disposition of surplus federal lands. Finally, the Task Force recommends that the Conservative government use the current evaluation of the Federal Co-operative Housing Program to examine new possibilities for co-operative housing in Canada. Material, labour and other home construction costs are generally the same across Canada. It is the land cost which is placing the price of housing beyond the reach of many Canadians. High land costs have not only prevented middle-income families in major urban centres, particularly Toronto and Vancouver, from purchasing their own homes but also thrown an insurmountable obstacle in the way of non-profit and co-operative housing groups which are striving to provide housing for low- and moderate-income Canadians.

The Task Force is convinced that measures must be found to moderate the impact of excessive land costs on the production of affordable housing. An appropriate place to start is with the land holdings of the federal government -- the country's largest landholder. The Task Force was told on several occasions that the availability of reasonably-priced land was one of the greatest concerns of those, in both the public and private sector, who seek to provide affordable housing for Canadians. High land costs also limit the effectiveness of federal housing dollars by reducing the number of units which can be constructed within the current Maximum Unit Price structure. The Task Force believes that it is crucial that the federal government make more Crown lands available for the construction of affordable housing

RECOMMENDATION

The Task Force recommends that the Conservative government amend Treasury Board regulations which require that Crown lands be disposed of at market prices and that federal departments, Crown corporations and agencies be required to identify land parcels, buildings and facilities surplus to their needs. Surplus Crown lands should be made available, on a priority basis, to public and private non-profit and co-operative housing companies, associations and groups. The government should explore the feasibility of leasing crown lands to assist in the production of affordable housing. Further, that a comprehensive policy for the disposition of these lands be implemented including mechanisms to facilitate the involvement of private sector developers and municipalities in the production of affordable housing. "Having a safe place to go is probably one of the most critical needs for all of us. When our home life is threatened most of us lose our stability. For many people with significant mental health problems, loss of housing is a frequent occurrence... We found people need more than just a pleasant physical surrounding with warm and caring people. Individuals with significant mental health problems also need assistance in developing the skills and supports

so that they may feel both satisfied and successful in the living arrangement."

Susan Chipperfield, Canadian Mental Health Association
Winnipeg, Manitoba, September 6, 1989

The physically disabled are not alone in experiencing difficulties in finding adequate affordable housing. The Task Force was told of the urgent need to develop supportive housing for those with psychiatric problems. It is important that housing be considered an integral component of therapy as other aspects of treatment may be fruitless in view of unstable housing situations. Housing models should emphasize the independence of the individual and reflect the distinct needs of each person.

RECOMMENDATION

The Task Force recommends that the Conservative government ensure that an adequate supply of affordable housing units be made available under the amalgam of programs administered by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for individuals with special needs. The location and design of units supported by CMHC must not prevent or discourage occupants from seeking or receiving rehabilitative and clinical services. The allocation of federal housing resources is based upon an agreement reached in 1985 among the provinces known as the Regina Accord. The Accord allocates federal funds according to three separate formulae; one for the Urban Native program, one for RRAP and a third for all other programs. The Accord provides no guarantees as to the total number of units which will be funded in a particular province in a specific year. Though in place for the past five years, the Regina Accord was intended to be an interim measure.

The Task Force was informed that this interim national allocation formula was penalizing those provinces which are able to deliver units at a lower cost. The Minister of Housing for the Province of New Brunswick, Hon. Peter Trites, told the Task Force in Moncton that: "the present mechanism for allocating federal budget dollars has been designed in such a manner that provinces like New Brunswick are losing budget dollars to those provinces where delivery costs are rising more rapidly. Essentially, this means that New Brunswick will not be in a position to deliver a full range of cost-shared housing programs without reducing the number of units to be delivered."

Mr. Trites called the combination of this federal allocation formula and Budget cuts to social housing, "both frightening and inequitable" and "holds the province hostage to external costs outside its control." While there may be no change in the level of need within a particular province from year to year, that province may still suffer a reduction in the amount of federal funding it receives if developments in other provinces reduces its' share of the national need. The Task Force shares Mr. Trite's concerns with respect to the national allocation formula and the detrimental impact its continuance has on the less populous provinces.

RECOMMENDATION

The Task Force urges the Minister of State (Housing) to expedite the development of a new national allocation formula which minimizes the year to year funding reductions a province may incur.

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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March 2000

Did the Weather Cause Canada's Mass Homelessness? Homeless-Making Processes and Canada's Homeless-Makers

DISCUSSION PAPER
David Hulchanski, TDRC Research Department
March 2000

[This report is also available in PDF format \(Requires Acrobat Reader\).](#)

"Homelessness does not occur in a social vacuum.

"In general, the events that make people homeless are initiated and controlled by other people whom our society allows to engage in the various enterprises that contribute to the homelessness of others.

"The primary purpose of these enterprises is not to make people homeless but, rather, to achieve socially condoned aims such as making a living, becoming rich, obtaining a more desirable home, increasing the efficiency at the workplace, promoting the growth of cultural institutions, giving cities a competitive advantage, or helping local or federal governments to balance their budgets or limit their debts. Homelessness occurs as a side effect.

"Yet it is a consequence of these enterprises, and therefore the discourse on homelessness must be broadened to reach into those areas of housing, income production, health care, and family life where the events and people contributing to homelessness are situated."

– Rene I. Jahiel, MD, PhD, from Chapter 18 in *Homeless: A Prevention-Oriented Approach*,
R.I. Jahiel, editor, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.

The following is a worksheet adopted from the article quoted above.

We start with the recognition that the weather does not cause the mass homelessness common in Canada today. Further, we recognize that some homeless people do have personal problems and that some have made poor decisions that may have led to their being homeless.

Why, however, did mass homelessness start happening in the 1980s? Were there no people with personal problems and people making poor decisions about options in the lives before the 1980s?

Since the 1980s there have been a number of *homeless making processes* set in motion. These 'processes' are not caused by 'nature' – such as an earthquake, ice storm, or flood. They are human made processes. People, in public and private institutions and organizations large and small, from households to corporations and governments, have set in motion and have left unchecked these homeless making processes. People able to stop or redress the harm fail to do so.

Homelessness in Canada will not be eliminated until we can specifically name the people and groups who

create, promote, refuse to redress and who benefit from these homeless making processes. They are Canada's homeless makers.

Canada's homeless makers prefer to believe, and take every opportunity to promote the belief, that the men, women and children who are homeless did this to themselves. It is their fault they are homeless. Some should be put in jail (for substance abuse or for being a public nuisance), some should be locked up or their own good in mental institutions, and the rest should take a bath and get a job. This self-serving ideology deflects the blame and protects those who benefit from the homeless making processes.

Such a wealthy and successful nation has tens of thousands of people sleeping in the streets and under bridges and in temporary shelters, scavenging food and begging for handouts, for but one reason: *because we allow it to continue.*

HOUSING SECTOR

Homeless-Making Processes:

1. evictions
2. displacement by rising rents
3. failure to find affordable housing
4. failure to find supportive housing
5. discrimination
6. _____
7. _____

Pressures Towards Homelessness:

1. insufficient production of low-cost housing
2. loss of low-rent housing by demolition, conversion or gentrification
3. loss of public housing through sale
4. loss of rent-geared-to-income subsidies due to budget cutbacks
5. rising price of housing and residential land
6. _____
7. _____

Homeless-Makers:

1. landlords
2. developers
3. banks
4. business
5. upper- and middle-income households
6. international interests
7. government
8. _____
9. _____

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE SECTOR

Homeless-Making Processes:

1. denial of public assistance
2. inadequate level of public assistance
3. _____
4. _____

Pressures Towards Homelessness:

1. changing attitudes about the poor
2. political isolation of poor people
3. inadequate public assistance programs
4. _____
5. _____

Homeless-Makers:

1. conservative political and business interests
2. middle classes voters who do not understand the issues
3. government policies and procedures
4. _____
5. _____

EMPLOYMENT SECTOR

Homeless-Making Processes:

1. exhaustion of financial resources due to unemployment
2. failure of wages to keep up with cost of living
3. failure to find employment
4. minimum wage, part-time, temporary employment
5. _____
6. _____

Pressures Towards Homelessness:

1. market factors
2. intentional cyclical unemployment
3. redistribution of income upwards within corporations
4. pressures making workers bargaining with employers less effective
5. decreased effectiveness of unemployment insurance
6. ineffectiveness of approaches to reemployment
7. _____
8. _____

Homeless-Makers:

1. business and corporations
2. financial interests
3. professionals
4. contractors
5. government
6. _____
7. _____

HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH, AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SECTORS

Homeless Making Processes:

1. economic impact of illness or disability
2. discrimination
3. expulsion because of behaviour
4. leaving, running away from residential setting
5. _____
6. _____

Pressures Towards Homelessness:

1. insufficient support services in the community
2. lack of adaptation of services to needs
3. insufficient supportive housing and supportive employment opportunities
4. discrimination in housing and employment against the chronically ill, people with a mental illness, or people recovering from substance abuse
5. _____
6. _____

Homeless-Makers:

1. family or household members(spouse, parent, child or others in the household)
2. social workers, educators, and other professionals
3. government policy makers and administrators
4. _____
5. _____

FAMILY SECTOR

Homeless-Making Processes:

1. abuse
2. being tossed out of the family home
3. running away from conditions at home
4. _____
5. _____

Pressures Towards Homelessness:

1. violence, abuse or fear thereof, or other family conflicts
2. failure of home to meet emotional needs
3. inequality within the family
4. foster care and related problems
5. _____
6. _____

Homeless-Makers:

1. family or household members(spouse, parent, child or others in the household)
2. social workers, educators, and other professionals
3. government policy makers and administrators
4. _____
5. _____

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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Friday December 14, 2001

Worst Christmas Ever

[Part A: Toronto's Shelter System: Overcrowded, Dangerous and Not Enough Beds](#)

[Part B: The City of Toronto Tuberculosis Outbreak: Homeless People at Risk](#)

[Part C: Tent City Solutions Stalled](#)

Part A:

Toronto's Shelter System: Overcrowded, Dangerous and Not Enough Beds

In October 2000, TDRC researched and wrote a report describing the appalling situation for homeless people in the City of Toronto. *State of the Disaster: Winter 2000* revealed a homelessness situation spiraling out of control, and a shelter system in chaos.

We found that shelters are dangerously overcrowded and filled with seriously ill people. Many shelters do not meet minimum United Nations standards for refugee camps. We identified a need for approximately 1000 additional shelter beds to accommodate all those who need safe shelter (including harm reduction options) and to reduce crowding and disease.

One year later, the city's response to our report and its recommendations can be summarized in two words: denial and inaction.

Shelter Facts

- In June 1999, City Council moved that if shelter occupancy exceeds 90%, new shelter beds must open on an emergency basis. Since that time, overall shelter occupancy has consistently exceeded 90%.
- Historically, shelter use decreased in summer months. Since 1997, there has been little or no seasonal reduction in shelter use according to city staff.
- In November 2000, city staff reported that there were 2892 beds in the single adult and youth shelter system. In November 2001, staff reported that there were 2904 beds in the system – **an increase of 12 beds**.
- In March 2001, the 1000 additional beds recommended by TDRC and approved by City Council were axed during the budget process. Overall shelter occupancy was 92%.
- In September 2001, occupancy was reported at 94-95%. The Homeless Advisory Committee called for the immediate opening of a large, temporary shelter for use until a sufficient number of beds are in place for the winter. This was not done.
- In October 2001, city staff admitted that shelters are full when occupancy reaches 90%. At the end of October 2001, occupancy levels were reported to be 97%.
- In November 2001, city staff announced 500 additional “beds” to reach a projected target of 3400 beds needed for winter. One third of these are mats in church basements provided through the Out of the Cold Program. One quarter of these were to have been at the former Princess Margaret Hospital site which the city now says is not an option. 32 are provided by adding beds to already crowded existing shelters.
- In November 2001, Toronto Public Health revealed that the city's first tuberculosis outbreak in decades occurred earlier this year at the city's largest shelter, Seaton House. One man died.
- In some Toronto shelters, it is not uncommon for two to three people to share a space which the United Nations says is the minimum safe amount of room for one person in a refugee camp.
- The Boston *Manual of Common Communicable Diseases in Shelters* recommends at least three feet of

space between shelter beds to reduce the risk of airborne disease transmission. This standard is often not met in city shelters.

- We have a death rate among homeless people of between 2 to 4 per week.
- According to research conducted by Dr. Stephen Hwang on homeless men living in Toronto's shelter system, the average age of death is 46 years. Men between the ages of 25 and 44 are almost four times more likely to die than their housed counterparts.
- In October 1998, Toronto City Council declared homelessness a national disaster.

Recommendations

We recommend that Toronto City Council direct the Commissioner of the Community and Neighbourhood Services Department to do the following:

- 1) Order a **moratorium on shelter closures** for the duration of the homelessness disaster.
- 2) **Open 1000 shelter beds:**
 - a. **Immediately open four emergency shelters or warming centers**, to be run by an aid organization such as the Red Cross, and able to accommodate up to 150 men, women and couples each. They should be available for the duration of the homelessness disaster.
 - b. **Open a number of appropriate smaller shelter facilities** (for example, which are smaller, more private, with increased supports on site) to meet the needs of women, people with disabilities, aboriginal people, youth, people with serious addictions or health/mental health problems, and people living with AIDS, to make up the remaining 400 beds required. Included in these beds should be at least one "wet hostel" for women and other harm reduction facilities to meet the needs of people in the above groups with addictions.
- 3) **Ensure that the above facilities and existing facilities meet the United Nations standards for refugee camps.** For example, an adequate number of toilets must be accessible; beds or cots and not mats on the floor must be provided; adequate space allocation must be provided; food must meet nutritional needs; health services should be provided on site.
- 4) **Ensure that the above facilities and existing facilities operate from a harm reduction philosophy.** There must be adequate staffing levels and adequate staff training with respect to mental health issues, harm reduction and crisis de-escalation to ensure both safety and the meeting of standards.
- 5) Direct the **Medical Officer of Health to carry out a special investigation of health standards** in the shelter system to ensure that they meet international public health standards.

Part B:

The City of Toronto Tuberculosis Outbreak: Homeless People at Risk

The Facts:

Definition: An **outbreak** is the occurrence of more cases of a communicable disease than expected in a given time period, within a given population.

An outbreak of TB was predicted by activists in the mid 1990s.

Between the Spring of 2001 and August 2001 there were 9 linked cases of TB found in Seaton House, the

largest men's hostel in Canada. All were Canadian born. 1 person was co-infected with HIV. 1 person has since died. Cases were linked by DNA testing. Street nurses know of 3 other cases preceding this outbreak within the same block.

60% of the men tested at Seaton House tested positive, indicating exposure to TB. This is up 57% from the 38% figure in a 1996 TB testing pilot.

What has been done? Treatment of individuals. Fans have been installed to promote air-exchange. Windows opened to maximize ventilation.

What was not done? No notice or communicate or alert to community health workers, street nurses or former members of the Tuberculosis Action Group. No warning to Hostel Services Department to not increase the crowding in existing shelters. No alert to the Out of the Cold programme even though shelter crowding, poor ventilation and forced migration are the major causes of TB infection and transmission.

Background on TB:

In 1991 the **Centre for Disease Control and Prevention** (Atlanta) recommended that low income populations (i.e. homeless) should be screened using a TB skin test.

In 1992 the **Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report** (MMWR) recommended that TB case finding should be part of the regular health care provided to homeless persons.

To this day the Department of Public Health has no program for routine screenings in the homeless population in the City of Toronto. Without doubt, the Seaton House outbreak is the tip of the iceberg.

What do we know about the Toronto TB numbers?

- ❑ In 1994 there were 170-180 TB cases/year in the City of Toronto
- ❑ In 1994 Dep't of Public Health Dep't followed 7 active cases that were homeless. From 1990 to 1994 there were 6-16 cases of TB/year that were homeless.
- ❑ In 1996 a TB Pilot Subcommittee (combination of community and City staff) completed a survey and issued a **Report on the Tuberculosis Pilot Project in the Homeless and Underhoused**. This report stated that the prevalence of active TB among homeless persons is estimated to be, in some areas, as high as 150-300 times greater than the general population (i.e. housed population).
- ❑ The **1996 report** showed that 38% of the homeless people tested positive meaning they had come in contact with someone with active TB. St. Michael's Hospital issued a statement in March, 1996 "the statistical findings of the pilot project....should be considered a wake up call."
- ❑ The **1996 report** made several important recommendations relevant to today's TB outbreak:

Recommendation 4.1: That the department should intensify efforts in TB case finding which would include Public Health Nurse liaisons with agencies working with the homeless; symptom screening and targeted Mantoux skin testing on a regular basis at agencies serving the homeless and underhoused.

Recommendation 5.1: "The Toronto Department of Public Health develop a resource center and a means of keeping the broader health and social service community up to date on information and trends."

Recommendation 5.2: "The Toronto Department of Public Health continue to research the literature on

environmental factors related to TB transmission including **ventilation, bed-spacing** and **ultra/violet lighting** and to advocate for infection control measures in spaces where people are congregating.”

Up to and including 1996 many activists from the Tuberculosis Action Group appealed to the Department of Public Health for a more active and aggressive TB prevention program. In 1996 Cathy Crowe, a street nurse warned “**the conditions are ripe for an epidemic.**”

- ❑ In 1998 there were 450-500 cases of TB/year in Toronto (Dr. Jeff Edelson, St. Michael’s Hospital)
- ❑ In 2000 there were 376 cases of TB
- ❑ Millions of people continue to die from TB around the world
- ❑ 1 in 10 people infected will go on to develop active disease. **This number is higher** if conditions of immune suppression exist. The conditions of stress, malnutrition, poor access to health care or proper shelter contribute to weakened immune systems, as do infections and disease such as HIV, Hepatitis, cancers and chronic illness such as diabetes or arthritis.

Today

Activists, homeless people, health care workers come together to share their concern and to appeal to the Department of Public Health and the Homeless Advisory Committee of the City of Toronto to act.

Their concerns and recommendations are based on fact, experience and the knowledge that in New York City measures which included TB screening were essential to prevent TB outbreaks. The Canadian Tuberculosis Standards, issued by Health Canada in 2000 recommends that groups that should be considered for systematic screening include the poor, especially the urban homeless. (p.189)

Recommendations:

1. The City notify the provincial government regarding the current danger homeless people face with respect to TB and ask for financial assistance for improving shelter conditions, housing and enhanced TB program funding.
2. The Board of Health immediately reappoint and call into action the pre-existing TB Subcommittee of the Board of Health.
3. The Board of Health hold an immediate inquiry into TB among the homeless.
4. The Medical Officer of Health issue a communiqué to all health care providers working with homeless people to alert them to the new TB crisis.
5. The Department of Public Health begin TB screening programs in the immediate vicinity of Seaton House including drop-in centers, Out of the Cold programmes and other shelters and that this radius of testing be expanded to other parts of the city.
6. The Department of Public Health examine the New York city process that **houses** homeless people with HIV infection within 24 hours.

Part C: Tent City Solutions Stalled

Background

Three different organizations applied to the City for Supporting Community Partnerships Initiatives (SCPI) funds to set up transitional housing at 525 Commissioner Street for homeless people. The development of these proposals cost many thousands of dollars and the energies of skilled and talented homeless people and professionals. In the end, Homes First was given the go-ahead to work on the project.

Homes First, the homeless people, and the Tent City Relocation Group (of which TDRC is a member) have been meeting to achieve this much needed interim strategy while waiting for permanent housing.

The sad part of this story is that the plans for the innovative proposal which largely came out of looking for a solution to the Tent City situation has been left in limbo. At the last City Council meeting this December 4-6, nothing more than a city staff report was submitted. Now the land which the City had identified and selected for this project is in question. City staff name several planning concerns relating to the site including the existence of a restrictive covenant on the site from the 1994 Agreement of Purchase and Sale between the Toronto Port Authority (a Federal body) and TEDCO.

Now, any resolution cannot be decided upon until the next City Council meeting in February, thereby pushing the development of housing further and further back. In fact, begging the question, will this project ever get off the ground and transitional housing built? Will the continuing negotiations and plans of Tent City dwellers, Homes First and the Tent City Relocation Group all come to naught?

This process that has been going on for over a year has so far led to only the exchange of words, expense of money, endless paperwork, and the dashing of hopes of homeless people who very much need a transitional inexpensive housing strategy.

We wait as Christmas nears and homelessness grows.

Recommendations:

1. The City expeditiously proceed with negotiations with the Port Authority to make the site available for development of transitional housing before the next City Council meeting in February.
2. In the alternative, the City find another suitable site and finish negotiations by the February City Council meeting.

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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State of the Crisis, 2001

A report on housing and homelessness in Canada

National Housing and Homelessness Network

November 26, 2001

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Full funding for a new national housing program

As federal, provincial and territorial housing ministers meet for a special housing summit on November 29 and 30, 2001, in Quebec City, the National Housing and Homelessness Network and our partners across the country has prepared this report on the state of Canada's nation-wide housing crisis and homelessness disaster.

We ask the Ministers to take note that:

- the latest figures from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation **confirm the depths of the nation-wide crisis** (see chapter 2);
- the **nation-wide housing crisis is growing worse** (see chapter 3);
- the **nation-wide homelessness disaster is more severe** (see chapter 4);
- the history of government-funded initiatives shows that **expensive private sector programs have failed to produce low-cost housing** (see chapter 5); and,
- the current crisis is caused by the **withdrawal of the federal and most provincial governments from funding new social housing** (see chapter 6).

The National Housing and Homelessness Network and our partners across the country welcome the federal promise to spend \$170 million a year over four years as a **welcome first step** towards a fully-funded national housing program. We **congratulate the Government of Quebec** for committing its share of this new program in its most recent provincial budget.

We call on the Ministers to:

- **immediately commit** the federal money to new social housing projects;
- **make sure all provinces and territories follow the lead of Quebec in providing matching funds**, to double the amount of new money available for social housing;
- make sure that the **program guidelines target the new funding most effectively** to build desperately-needed new housing for low, moderate and middle-income renter households through the creation of new non-profit and co-operative housing; and,
- take the next step towards a fully-funded national housing program by committing to the One Percent Solution, which calls for the **federal government to spend \$2 billion in new social housing funding annually, with a matching amount from provincial and territorial governments**.

Rising rents, dwindling supply

For the second year in a row, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's annual rental market survey has set the dubious record of being the worst ever since the agency started its current system of measurement in 1987.

For full details, see tables 1 and 2.

The numbers confirm that rental vacancy rates are falling to critically low levels across the

country. These rates, which measure the number of vacant units, are a key measure of the health of a rental market.

Not only is the overall rental rate of 1.1% for Canada well below the healthy rate of 3.0%, but nine of the country's 26 metropolitan have rates at or below 1%. Only five of the 26 regions have rental rates that are in the healthy zone.

At the same time, rents have risen in every metropolitan region across the country, including those areas with healthy vacancy rates. Rising rents means that the cost of existing housing is moving out of the reach of low and moderate income tenants.

Toronto has broken the \$1,000 rent ceiling with the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment. The median household income in Toronto is \$27,039 – which means half the renter households in the city have less than \$750 per month to afford to pay for rent.

Victoria, with a rental vacancy rate of 0.5%, has the worst rental market in the country. Edmonton has posted the biggest annual rent increase at 8.7%.

Nation-wide housing crisis

“Rising rents dramatically outpaced tenant incomes in the early- to mid-1990s, and this trend is likely to continue. The rising demand for rental housing, coupled with changes in rent legislation and little new supply, are causing sharp rent increases. . . As recently as 1996, units in Toronto renting for less than \$800 per month amounted to more than two-thirds of all units. . . They now make up only one-third of the total.”
City of Toronto Report Card on Homelessness 2001

Rising rents, stagnant and falling incomes, dwindling supply of affordable units – this is the crisis facing the 4.8 million renter households in Canada. More than 13 million women, men and children live in renter households, about 40% of the Canadian population.

Growing poverty is a factor for a growing number of renter households. Almost one-in-five tenant households are on the brink of homelessness, paying 50% or more of their monthly income on rent. More than one-in-three tenant households are paying more than 30% of their income on rent, which pushes them into the “unaffordable” category.

In October of 2001, Statistics Canada reported that the gap between rich and poor in Canada

has surged to a 25-year-high. Most of the growing number of poor are renters.

In 1984, the median income for renter households was \$21,554, about half the \$41,380 median income for owner households. By 1999, the median income for renter households had dropped by 3% to \$20,947, while owner incomes increased 5% to \$43,478. The gap between owners and tenants has grown to 208%.

With half of the country's tenant population having less than \$21,000 in income, this leaves 2.4 million tenant households with less than \$580 per month that they can afford to pay for rent. In the year 2000, only 24 of the country's 57 metropolitan and large urban areas had average rents of \$580 or less.

Seniors, older women, single moms, Aboriginal people. All these face a disproportionately high share of housing distress.

According to Statistics Canada, 50% of all single seniors are renters and of these, 39% are older women living on annual incomes of \$12,500. They can only afford a monthly rent of about \$350. A recent report on mid-life and older women found:

“Those women who participated in the Housing Factor Project span ages from mid-forties to over ninety years of age. There are almost as many women under the age of sixty-five as over. They come from a number of linguistic, cultural and geographical groups, some living in cities, some in villages or town, and some on reserves and in rural areas. They live with diverse circumstances, privileges and needs. And they have a great deal in common. The findings of the Housing Factor Project indicate a number of significant and disturbing factors about housing for mid-life and older women in [Hamilton, Ottawa, Parry Sound, Toronto, Tweed]. Overwhelmingly the women want the option of aging in place, not only in their own homes but also in their own communities. Financial concerns dominate all others in relation to availability of housing. In addition mid-life and older women fear increasing frailty and loss of health with very little evidence of services that will be available to them in order for them to stay in their own home.”

The Housing Factor Project, Older Women's Network, 2000

The Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CAST) and the University of Toronto's Centre for Urban and Community Studies released a study in November of 2001 showing that the housing crisis was a factor in one-in-five cases of children admitted to the society's care:

“In one of five cases, the family's housing situation was a factor that resulted in temporary placement of a child into care. . . The number of children admitted to care where housing was a factor increased by about 60% over the eight-year period: from

about 290 children in 1992 to about 450 in 2000. . . The approximately 450 cases in which housing was a factor in the admission to care during 2000 cost Children's Aid Society of Toronto about \$18 million."

One in Five. . . Housing as a Factor in the Admission of Children to Care, CAST, 2001

Rising rents set against stagnant or declining incomes means that tenants have an increasing difficulty paying the rent. And a growing number of tenant households are facing economic eviction. In Ontario during the year 2000, 54,000 tenant households were faced eviction because they could not pay the rent.

Even during the holiday season, the evictions continued at a high pace:

Joseph's landlord applied to evict him the day after Christmas for \$37.99. Joseph has been living in his west-end Toronto apartment for 15 years and is in dispute with his landlord over how much rent he should be paying. Joseph M is one of 1,948 tenants whose landlord applied to evict during twelve days of Christmas. Considering the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal's offices were closed for six days in that period, we're looking at 325 eviction applications a day during the peace and goodwill season.

Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, December 2000

About 40,000 renter households faced eviction in Quebec during the year 2000.

“Non-conventional” private rental housing

Some politicians say that, while the conventional private rental market is sinking into crisis, tenant households can find relief in the so-called non-conventional market, which includes rented condominiums, accessory apartments (including illegal units) and tenant-occupied single, semi and row dwellings.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing funded a detailed study by the Starr Group in 2000, which examined the secondary rental market in Ontario. The study found that non-conventional housing comprises a large portion of the overall rental market. For instance, in the suburban area around Toronto, more than 70% of the rental market is in secondary units.

Three key findings of the CMHC-MAH study:

This review, however, cautions that most forms of secondary rental housing are highly elastic; that is, their availability depends heavily on overall economic and real estate conditions and therefore they cannot be counted on as a long-term permanent

supply. Indeed, our analysis shows that the supply of various forms of secondary rental housing in many communities has declined significantly at various times. Accordingly, security of tenure is an important issue that must be addressed in any policy aimed at encouraging expansion of secondary rental housing.

The market analysis finds that most forms of secondary rental housing have not been growing in most communities. Condominium rentals, in particular, have been declining as more owner-occupants move into the condominium market. . .

Because of the lack of expansion of these markets, vacancy rates for such forms of housing are quite low in most centres. Rents for most forms of secondary rental housing have been rising sharply in most areas, consistent with the low vacancy rates in both the secondary and conventional markets. Even the most affordable forms of secondary rental housing, accessory apartments, units over stores and duplexes/triplexes are increasingly moving out of reach of those at the lower end of the income scale, especially those on social assistance or working at minimum wage.

Secondary Rental Market Study, The Starr Group, 2000

A coast-to-coast snapshot of the housing crisis

Victoria:

One in ten households in Victoria earn less than \$10,000 annually. They can only afford monthly rents of \$277. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Victoria is \$731.

Vancouver:

An estimated 13,000 households are on the social housing waiting lists in Greater Vancouver. Almost one-quarter of tenant households, more than 66,200 households, are paying 50% or more of their income on rent. During the 1990s, about 1,200 single room occupancy units were lost, mostly in the downtown eastside. About 700 social housing units for singles were built, leaving a net loss of about 500 units.

Edmonton:

More than 2,400 people are on the waiting list for affordable housing in Edmonton. Almost 21,000 households were spending more than 50% of their income on rent in 1995, a total of 18.5% of renter households. The rental vacancy rate in Edmonton has dropped from a high of more than 10% in 1995 to a critically low 1.4% in 2000. The city has lost more than 1,800 rental housing units since 1990.

Calgary:

More than 17,700 households paid more than half their monthly income on rents in 1995, a total of 16.9% of renter households. The city is losing rental units much faster than they are

being built. About 3,500 rental units were converted to condominium from 1995 to 1998. There are more than 3,000 people on social housing waiting lists.

Regina:

There were 621 households on the local waiting list in 1999. One-in-five tenant households, a total of more than 5,000 households, are spending more than half their monthly income on rent.

Saskatoon:

In 1998, there were 1,600 households on the waiting list for social housing, an increase of 9% from 1996. More than 7,100 tenant households are paying more than half their monthly income on rent. In 1996, 304 government-subsidized low-income units were bought by realty companies in 1996 and rents have increased an average of 45%

Winnipeg:

In 1999, there were more than 2,000 households on the social housing waiting list, an increase of 40% since 1993. Rental housing losses, especially in the inner city, are increasing. In 1998 alone, 123 single family dwellings were demolished. About 70% of Aboriginal households have severe affordability problems.

London:

Average rents in London increased by 25% between 1989 and 1999. Between 1992 and 1998, renter household incomes decreased by 11%. There were 1,156 households on the social housing waiting list in 1999. The London Housing Registry was only able to find homes for 438 households in 1998, only half of the agency's 869 client households. Almost one-quarter of tenant households are on the brink of homelessness, paying 50% or more of their income on housing.

Kitchener:

There are more than 3,800 households on the Waterloo Region social housing waiting list. Fully 56% are families with children. One-in-five tenant households are paying 50% or more of their income on housing, a total of 10,225 households. Between 1994 and 1998, 682 rental units were converted to condominium or demolished, far more than the number of new rental units built.

Guelph:

From Jan. 1999 to Aug. 2001, a total of 2,269 households applied for social housing units in Guelph, but only 13 were placed.

Toronto:

The social housing waiting list in November 2000 included 20,364 single adults, 30,563 families and 12,183 seniors – a total of 63,000 households. Applicants are told that the wait for a unit could be from 12 to 19 years. The handful of new rental units that have been offered in recent years have had monthly rents ranging from \$1,375 to \$2,750.

Kingston:

The number of people on social housing waiting lists has risen by 66% from 1992 to 1998.

Ottawa:

The social housing waiting list has grown from 8,575 households in 1993 to 15,000 households in 1998. There were 5,500 new applications in 1998 alone. Ottawa has the worst rental housing market in the country, with the tightest rental vacancy rate (0.2%) and the highest annual increase in rents (12% in one year only from 1999 to 2000). About 1,740 rental units were taken off the market from 1996 to 1998, many times the amount of new rental housing that was built.

Montreal:

One-in-four tenant households in Montreal – a total of 163,415 households – are paying 50% or more of their income on rents. That is an increase of 43% from 1990 to 1995.

St. John's:

One in four tenant households in St. John's are spending more than half their monthly income on rents. This is a total of 4,655 households. About 300 rental units have been converted to condominium since 1997, reducing the overall rental housing stock.

Canada's homelessness disaster

We call on all levels of government to declare homelessness a national disaster requiring emergency humanitarian relief. We urge that they immediately develop and implement a National Homelessness Relief and Prevention Strategy using disaster relief funds both to provide the homeless with immediate health protection and housing and to prevent further homelessness.

State of Emergency Declaration, October 1998

In November of 1998, the mayors of Canada's biggest cities (the Big City Mayors Caucus of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities) passed a resolution to declare homelessness is a national disaster. The decision came just one month after the Toronto Disaster Relief

Committee, a group of homeless people and housing advocates, issued its State of Emergency Declaration.

Homelessness has grown so bad in Canada that it fully meets the definition of a national disaster.

There are no consistent national or provincial measures of the homeless. Some counts include only those who stay in shelters, and exclude those on the streets. Others exclude residents of shelters for abused women. Short-term programs, sometimes called Out of the Cold or In from the Cold, which use church basements and community centres are sometimes left out.

A large percentage of the homeless in urban, rural and remote areas are Aboriginal people. Housing conditions on First Nations reserves are often bad, but life in Canada's cities offers little relief:

“Aboriginal people are over-represented in Canada's homeless population by a factor of about 10. Individuals of Aboriginal origin account for 35% of the homeless population in Edmonton, 18% in Calgary, 11% in Vancouver, and 5% in Toronto, but only 3.8%, 1.9%, 1.7% and 0.4% of the general populations in those cities respectively. A disproportionate number of homeless people who sleep on the street rather than in shelters are of Aboriginal origin.”

Dr. Stephen Hwang, Homelessness and Health, January 2001

Most experts agree that at least 250,000 people will experience homelessness during the course of a year. A comparison of hostels in just seven Canadian cities shows the number of bed nights occupied by homeless people over the course of the year doubled from 1.4 million in 1987 to 2.4 million in 1999 (see table 3). The Canadian Press reported on June 11, 2000:

TORONTO -- Tonight, more homeless people per capita will sleep on the streets and in the shelters of Toronto than in several major U.S. cities. In fact, statistics show that homelessness in Canada's largest urban centre is comparable to levels in New York City, long considered the homeless capital of North America. About 75,000 people used municipal shelters last year in the Big Apple, an analysis of data provided by the city reveals. By contrast, 28,800 people used emergency shelters in Toronto in 1998, the city's current Report Card on Homelessness shows. Once population differences are taken into account, the percentage of people in Toronto using shelters is actually 15.8 per cent higher than in New York.

But not every homeless person ends on the streets. The Regional Municipality of Sudbury

released a study in October of 2000 which identified 407 homeless people. There were only 68 beds in shelters, so most of the homeless were left on the streets or “couch-surfing” with friends or relatives.

The study also reported that the most frequent cause of homelessness in Sudbury was related to lack of employment, followed by problems with social assistance (in particular, inadequate welfare payments), a lack of affordable housing, and domestic violence.

“Homelessness affects tens of thousands of Canadians and has important health implications. Homeless people are at increased risk of dying prematurely and suffer from a wide range of health problems, including seizures, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, musculoskeletal disorders, tuberculosis, and skin and foot problems. Homeless people also face significant barriers that impair their access to health care.”

Dr. Stephen Hwang, Homelessness and Health, January 2001

Homelessness is not only costly to the children, women and men who are caught without shelter, but there is a significant public cost. A recent study by the Government of British Columbia found that the cost of health and social services, policing and crisis centres for homeless people ranged from \$30,000 to \$40,000. The costs for those who moved into government-supported housing dropped to \$22,000 to \$28,000. The study found:

“The literature demonstrates that there is a strong relationship between homelessness and the health care, social services and criminal justice systems. People who do not have safe, secure, affordable shelter have more health problems than the general population, experience social problems that may be exacerbated by their lack of shelter, and are more likely to become involved in criminal activity than the general public. This tends to result in greater use of some services by the homeless, particularly hospital emergency services, shelters and correctional institutions, in terms of frequency and length of use. Some specific sub-groups of the homeless, such as those with mental illness, are even more likely to be involved with the health care, social services and criminal justice systems. . . Research confirms (though the number of studies is limited) that preventive measures are more cost-effective than the status quo. Issues arising from homelessness are more costly to deal with after the fact than if homelessness were prevented in the first place. It is essentially a problem of ‘pay now or pay **more** later.’”

Homelessness – causes and effects, Government of British Columbia, 2001

A coast-to-coast snapshot of homelessness

Vancouver:

At least 600 people sleep outside every night in Vancouver, more than the 400 who sleep in the city's shelters. The number of people sleeping on the floor on mats (because there are no beds) at one shelter tripled by 3,887 in 1995 to 10,758 in 1998.

Edmonton:

A municipal count in 1999 found 836 people were homeless that night – 523 in the shelters and 313 on the streets. With only 511 beds in the hostel system, the occupancy rate was 102%. That night, 113 people were turned away because there was no more room. In addition, 32 people were discharged that day by hospitals or prisons onto the streets, with no place to live. Current estimates are that more than 1,200 people are homeless every night. Shelters for abused women, operating at capacity, turned away 3,000 families in 1997.

Calgary:

A municipal count of homeless people in Calgary on May 21, 1998, found 998 homeless people in shelters, an increase of 121% from 1992. Most shelters were full that day, with some over capacity. One hundred people were turned away.

Saskatoon:

A total of 6,700 people stayed in city shelters in 1998. About 68% were Aboriginal. About 28% were children.

Parry Sound:

Families in Parry Sound sleep in cars and call this home. Homeless people in the community “couch-surf” (go from friend to friend) in order to have shelter.

Gravenhurst:

The area's only homeless shelter has been full every night since opening last year.

Barrie:

There were 8,491 bed-nights at homeless shelters in Barrie in 1998, an increase of 1,235% from 1994.

London:

An average of 400 households used London's three emergency shelters in 1998, an increase of 13% since 1995.

Cambridge:

Homeless shelters in Cambridge and throughout the Waterloo Region were entirely full during the past winter. One youth shelter in Cambridge was so full that it started a waiting list. The Out-of-the-Cold program, which offers temporary shelter, has seen a 20% to 30% increase every year since it was started four years ago.

Toronto:

More than 30,000 people stayed in hostels in 1999. The biggest increase was among two-parent families. Toronto has a shortfall of about 1,000 hostel beds. Many shelters do not meet the basic United Nations standards for refugee camps. Death rates for young homeless men are 8.3 times higher than the general population of young men. More than 100 unclaimed bodies were buried by city officials last year, most of them homeless. The Toronto Disaster Relief Committee recorded 39 confirmed deaths of homeless people last year.

Peel Region:

There were 28,403 bed-nights at homeless shelters in 1998, a 41% increase from 1994. The number of families staying in a motel, because there was no room in the hostel system, grew from 351 in 1997 to 689 in 1998.

Peterborough:

There were 3,762 bed-nights at homeless shelters in Peterborough in 1998, an increase of 98% from 1994.

Kingston:

Emergency shelter use rose by 210% from 1998 to 2000.

Ottawa:

Homeless families required 71% more shelter bed nights from January to June of this year than during the same period in 2000.

Montreal:

An estimated 8,250 people use homeless shelters in Montreal. About 380 are under the age of 18. Current estimates are between 10,000 and 15,000 homeless people overall in the city. Death rates among street youth in Montreal are nine times higher for males and 31 times higher for females than in the general youth population of Quebec.

Quebec City:

An estimated 2,118 people use homeless shelters in Quebec City. About 250 are under the age of 18.

Saint John:

A van that provides meals for the homeless helped 126 times during the first two weeks of November, 2001, compared to 171 times during the entire month of November last year.

Charlottetown:

According to a recent, “conservative” survey, there are at least 268 homeless people in Charlottetown. This includes 20 women with children, 52 youth and 18 Aboriginal people. Nearby Summerside has another 65 homeless people.

Halifax:

During three years in the late 1990s, a total of 14 homeless women died on the streets of Halifax.

St. John’s:

“Hidden homelessness” is a major problem in St. John’s. There are a large number of people living in substandard, inadequate and unaffordable boarding and lodging houses.

Private sector rental housing programs

The federal government and the provincial government in Ontario have tried a number of private sector housing programs since the late 1940s. In almost every program, there has been a huge public subsidy that ended up creating mostly high-end rental housing. Despite public expenditures of more than \$3 billion, none of the programs created long-term security for renter households.

The pattern is clear. The big expensive programs produced expensive private rental units. Those programs with tight rent restrictions – such as Renterprise in Ontario – weren’t able to attract private developers, which could get a bigger return for their investment dollars in condominiums.

The private sector is willing to take government money, but it has been unable to deliver affordable rental housing. Private sector programs have been the least regulated housing programs put in place by senior levels of government. They have produced the fewest benefits to low-income households.

A brief history:

Limited Dividend Program (1946 to 1975) created 101,300 units that were, initially, moderately priced. But, over time, rents were allowed to rise beyond those affordable to low-income tenant households.

Multiple Unit Residential Building – MURB (1974 to 1981) created 195,000 units at an estimated cost to taxpayers of \$2.4 billion. There were no rent restrictions, so rents tended to be at the upper end of the market.

Assisted Rental Program (1975) created 122,650 private rental units at a cost of \$300

million. The federal government provided grants or loans to private landlords with no restrictions or requirements on rents. An early study of the program showed that in Toronto, average ARP rents were 32% higher than average market rents.

Canada Rental Supply Plan (1981) cost taxpayers \$258.5 million (including the subsequent Canada/Ontario Rental Supply Program). Under the terms of the program, up to one-third of the units were to be offered to provincial governments or local housing authorities for rent-geared-to-income housing for low-income households. Authorities had 45 days to “take-up” the offer. Of the 24,667 units funded across Canada, only 1,526 (6.2%) were taken up as RGI. For CORSP, 2,675 units were funded, but only 474 RGI units (18%) were taken up.

A dramatic example of the high cost, and lack of benefits, under the CRSP program was a private building on Bay Street in downtown Toronto built in 1985/86. The private building was supposed to offer as many as one-third of the units for low-income households, but none were in fact used. More than half the tenants had incomes of \$50,000 annually, which was double the median income of Toronto tenants at the time. Two and one-half years after occupancy, the building was converted into a limited partnership. The average rents at 1985/86 were \$1,118 for the rental building. Value of tax expenditures was \$2,429 per unit in 1985 for rental building. By 1992, the estimated value of taxpayer expenditures was \$8,271 for the rental building.

Ontario Rental Construction Loans program (Ontario, 1981) cost taxpayers \$75 million for 15-year interest free loans to private landlords with no restrictions on rents. Landlords were supposed to offer up to 20% of units to local housing authorities for RGI. Of the total of 14,540 units produced, with only 1,029 (7.3%) were set aside for RGI.

Convert-to-rent (Ontario, 1983), produced 11,900 units in Ontario with a wide range of rents (monthly rents for one-bedroom ranged from \$400 to \$900 and from \$650 to \$1,250 for two-bedroom). The rents were all well above market rents, and not affordable to low-income households.

Renterprise (Ontario, 1985) cost a modest \$15.4 million and had the goal of building 5,000 new private rental units. Target market rents were established and many developers withdrew Renterprise applications in favour of condominiums. Only 2,176 units were built.

A 1997 study funded by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation that compared the long-term costs and benefits of private sector and social housing projects, found that the cost to taxpayers of subsidizing co-op and non-profit projects was far less than the cost of subsidizing private developers and landlords. Ekos Research, which carried out the study, found that in year 25, the social housing projects cost taxpayers \$800,000 less than the

private rental projects. An excerpt from their study:

In all ten comparisons, the non-profit break-even rents started out higher than private rents but then rose more slowly than market rents. In nine of the ten cases, the non-profit rents crossed below market between the fourth and eighteenth year of operation. Assessing the resulting subsidy costs for comparable households (based on the use of a consistent 30 percent RGI scale), the study found that, over the past two decades, the non-profit vehicle has been the most effective vehicle in nine of the ten cases. On average, over time it is less expensive to subsidize households in non-profit projects. For example, in year 25 the estimated average subsidy of a non-profit unit compared to the estimated subsidy for a market unit is some \$20,000 a year less. . . Since the ten projects have a total of some 400 units, the total savings in year 25 for these projects alone would be some \$800,000. . . Where there are tight rental markets (i.e., extremely low vacancy rates) and governments wish to address supply issues at the same time as they address issues of housing need, non-profit projects can be more cost effective than subsidizing the construction of comparable market units and renting units from a private landlord.

Cost-effective housing, Ekos Research Associates, 1997

A study released by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation in October of 2001 reports that “landlord-investors” are not interested in renting to low-income households, since there is relatively little return to be made on their investment. The study reports that:

In exploring landlord attitudes about the need for affordable housing to serve lower-income tenants, landlords-investors did not contest the legitimacy of social housing and a direct government role in the provision of affordable housing. Many expressed interest in demand-side approaches such as shelter allowance and rent supplements. However, they also saw the need for social housing, particularly to house households on low income and those on social assistance, whom some preferred not to accommodate.

Residualization of rental tenure, CMHC, October 2001

The solution: Restore funding for social housing

The federal government has abandoned its responsibilities with regards to housing problems. . . The housing crisis is growing at an alarming rate and the government sits there and does nothing; it refuses to apply the urgent measures that are required to reverse this deteriorating situation. . . The federal government’s role would be that of a partner working with other levels of government, and private and public housing

groups. But leadership must come from one source; and a national vision requires some national direction.

Paul Martin, MP, Liberal Task Force on Housing, 1990

The private sector is unable and unwilling to build sufficient affordable housing to meet the growing needs of low-income households. Voluntary groups, such as Habitat for Humanity, play an important role, but they too are unable to build in sufficient quantity. This year, Habitat for Humanity will build about 200 houses across the country. The group deals with the housing needs of moderate-income households and cannot meet the huge demand for new housing supply.

“It must be accepted that causes of homeless situations described remain to be dealt with, perhaps through agreement and joint action on the part of all levels of Government. The reason that such an initiative must devolve upon Government is that homeless and near-homeless people do not represent an attractive market for private investors and developers, any more than they represent an attractive political market.”

SCPI Community Plan on Homelessness 2001, Charlottetown - Summerside

Changes to the national *Housing Act* in 1973 brought in the first fully-funded co-op and non-profit housing programs in Canada. In introducing the programs, the Minister responsible for housing told the House of Commons:

“Good housing at a reasonable cost is a social right of every citizen of this country. . . [This] must be our objective, our obligation, our goal”.

The federal and several provincial governments funded new social housing over a 20-year period from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s. This funding helped to create hundreds of thousands of units of good quality, affordable non-profit and co-operative housing, which continues to provide good homes to more than one million Canadians even today. Unlike the private sector programs, which were only able to deliver housing for low and moderate-income households for, at best, a short time, social housing remains affordable forever.

Funding, through provincial and territorial governments and CMHC, the federal housing agency, peaked at approximately \$4 billion annually in 1993/94.

Approximately \$2 billion of this funding was allocated through provincial/territorial budgets. The other \$2 billion flowed from federal coffers through CMHC. Since 1993/93, funding for social housing through these sources has declined by \$500,000,000. . . . Approximately \$450,000,000 or 90 percent of the reduction is at the provincial / territorial level, the other \$50,000,000 is from the CMHC budget. The reduction in funding is localized in certain provinces, particularly Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Alberta and Ontario. In dollar terms, the most significant declines in

funding have been in Alberta and Ontario.

Canadian Housing Policy, Prof. Tom Carter, 2000

For more information, see table 4.

Completion of new social housing often exceeded 20,000 units annually in the late '70s and early '80s. By the late '80s, production had fallen to an annual average of just over 12,000 units. In 1998, according to the most recent figures available, less than 2,000 units were produced.

“In the space of approximately fifteen years, Canada has moved from a situation where it had an active and substantive social housing program to the point where it no longer has a national social housing policy.”

Canadian Housing Policy, Prof. Tom Carter, 2000

It is no coincidence that the growth of the nation-wide housing crisis and homelessness disaster parallels the withdrawal of federal and most provincial governments from social housing funding. With no government funding to assist social housing providers create no units, and little new affordable private rental housing, the growing number of low-income households faced an inevitable squeeze.

The Quebec government remains the only province committed to long-term social housing funding. The Quebec program proceeds in partnership with municipalities. British Columbia is “reviewing” its funding for several projects approved by the previous provincial government.

As housing problems have grown worse, municipalities have raised the alarm, and a number have introduced innovative local programs to create new units. These developments have allowed a limited amount of new housing to be built. One of the most recent initiatives is a \$6.5 million capital fund created by Waterloo Region to create 550 social housing units and an additional 140 rent-geared-to-income housing units in existing buildings. The municipal response is welcome, but cash-strapped local governments cannot assume the entirely financial responsibility for new housing programs – a responsibility abandoned by most senior levels of government.

After considerable political pressure from a variety of groups, including the National Housing and Homelessness Network and its partners across the country, the federal government announced \$753 million in funding for a new homelessness strategy in December of 1999. The money, including the Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative (SCPI), was supposed to go to short-term measures to provide emergency relief for the homeless. Many worthwhile local projects have been funded with the new federal money.

Hard work at the community level has also produced a number of housing projects in St. John's, Halifax, Toronto and elsewhere funded with SCPI, often using a patchwork of funding including municipal and private money. But SCPI is not a housing program and it can't replace the need for a new, fully funded national social housing program.

Economic benefits of social housing

New social housing brings social and economic benefits, along with the homes:

“I want to make the argument, however, that social housing also has benefits – social benefits that have positive direct and indirect economic spin-offs. These benefits accrue to individuals and families and also to society as a whole. If we neglect to provide adequate levels of social housing, society will pay the price through increased costs in other areas. I now want to address a few of the benefits of social housing and illustrate why it is so important to provide adequate levels of housing: poverty alleviation, child poverty, skills development, improved educational opportunities, a healthy environment, privacy and modesty issues, empowerment, neighbourhood stability, community development initiatives, neighbourhood revitalization, stabilizing marginalized households, addressing the needs of Aboriginals/indigenous people, family stability. I could continue, but the preceding comments provide more than enough examples of why we need a strong social housing program.”

Access to Housing: The Social Side, Prof. Tom Carter, 2001

The shared goal of NHHN and many other groups for 20,000 new social housing units and 10,000 renovated units would bring considerable benefits.

A Parliamentary study two years ago found that 20,000 new units would generate 16,200 person-years of employment. The 10,000 renovated units would generate 8,100 person-years.

A study by a consulting firm in 1992 also reported considerable benefits. It found that 20,000 new social housing units would create housing co-ops 15,800 direct person-years (in the construction sector), 10,200 indirect person-years (mainly in construction materials and manufacturing) and 18,200 induced person-years (in many sectors including transportation, communications, utilities, forestry, mining).

The same study found that 10,000 renovated units would generate 7,000 direct person-years, 3,000 indirect person-years and 340 induced person-years of employment.

The author also calculated that 30,000 new units would also generate \$570 million in

At a time when the Canadian economy, and world economy, appears to be falling into recession, the economic stimulus from a fully-funded national housing program would be considerable.

Aboriginal control of Aboriginal housing

In addition to many general economic and social benefits, off-reserve Aboriginal housing has a particularly strong record of success:

“Together, urban and rural Aboriginal housing institutions are responsible for the management of approximately 19,000 units serving nearly 85,500 individuals. . . Adequate, suitable and affordable housing provided by urban Aboriginal housing institutions have a measurable and profound impact upon the well-being of off-reserve Aboriginal households. Aboriginal tenants indicate that their accommodation contributes to their families stability and access to education. Aboriginal owned and operated housing also helps to preserve and reinforce cultural identity of Aboriginal peoples. Improvement in community morale, identity and self-worth is a central part of the healing process. . . Aboriginal housing institutions have been able to offer more than just a real estate or property management function. . . All foster a sense of community among their clients. . . At its annual meeting held in Ottawa in April 1998, National Aboriginal Housing Association members passed a Resolution calling the Government to “acknowledge and recognize the Aboriginal control of Aboriginal housing policy of Aboriginal people”. Members further resolved that the NAHA “. . . directors seek the transfer of the Aboriginal housing portfolio to Aboriginal control, to NAHA and its constituent members”.

Halt the Transfer!, NAHA, 1998

Restore federal, provincial, territorial housing funding

The National Housing and Homelessness Network is calling on federal, provincial and territorial governments to adopt the One Percent Solution:

- \$2 billion in new funding for social housing annually by the federal government, and
- \$2 billion in new funding for social housing annually shared among the provincial and territorial governments.

Table 1

Vacancy Rates in Apartment Structures of Three Units and Over Privately Initiated, in Metropolitan Areas

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Atlantic Region					
St. John's	16.6	15.4	9.2	3.8	2.5
Halifax	7.7	5.5	3.6	3.6	2.8
Saint John	8.27	3	5.2	3.4	5.6
Quebec Region					
Chicoutimi	4.1	4.8	4.9	4.4	4.4
Hull	9.4	6.7	4.4	1.4	0.6
Montréal	5.9	4.7	3.0	1.5	0.6
Québec	6.6	5.2	3.3	1.6	0.8
Sherbrooke	7.5	7.3	7.6	4.7	2.3
Trois-Rivières	8.6	8.5	7.9	6.8	4.7
Ontario Region					
Hamilton	3.1	3.2	1.9	1.7	1.3
Kitchener	1.9	1.5	1.0	0.7	0.9
London	5.1	4.5	3.5	2.2	1.6
Oshawa	2.4	2.0	1.7	1.7	1.3
Ottawa	4.2	2.1	0.7	0.2	0.8
St. Catharines	5.4	4.6	3.2	2.6	1.9
Sudbury	7.2	9.4	11.1	7.7	5.7
Thunder Bay	7.7	9.3	7.5	5.8	5.8
Toronto	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.6	0.9
Windsor	4.5	4.3	2.7	1.9	2.9
Prairie Region					
Calgary	0.5	0.6	2.8	1.3	1.2
Edmonton	4.6	1.9	2.2	1.4	0.9
Regina	1.5	1.7	1.4	1.4	2.1
Saskatoon	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.7	2.9
Winnipeg	5.9	4.0	3.0	2.0	1.4
British Columbia Region					
Vancouver	1.7	2.7	2.7	1.4	1.0
Victoria	3.5	3.8	3.6	1.8	0.5
Total (1)	4.1	3.4	2.6	1.6	1.1

(1) Weighted average of Metropolitan Areas Surveyed.

Source: CMHC, 2001

Table 2 Weighted Average Rent by Metropolitan Area Privately Initiated Three Apartment Units and Over

One-Bedroom		Two-Bedroom	
2000	2001	2000	2001

Atlantic Region

St.John's	477	489	552	575
Halifax	539	554	648	673
Saint John	402	406	460	483

Québec Region

Chicoutimi	363	364	438	439
Hull	457	485	544	573
Montréal	458	480	509	530
Québec	459	473	518	538
Sherbrooke	362	366	437	446
Trois-Rivières	349	358	413	419

Ontario Region

Hamilton	582	608	719	740
Kitchener	598	615	697	722
London	530	547	657	683
Oshawa	684	692	778	799
Ottawa	723	762	877	914
St.Catharines	545	569	653	680
Sudbury	502	500	619	620
Thunder Bay	527	529	654	657
Toronto	830	866	979	1,027
Windsor	599	618	736	738

Prairie Region

Calgary	611	649	740	783
Edmonton	489	537	601	654
Regina	461	476	549	568
Saskatoon	442	460	541	558
Winnipeg	473	476	588	605

British Columbia Region

Vancouver	695	726	890	919
Victoria	579	592	731	751

Source: CMHC, 2001

Table 3 - Homeless shelter usage, 1987 and 1999

(not including overflow, short-term and battered women beds)

Metropolitan area	bed nights 1987	bed nights 1999	per cent increase
Edmonton	400	424	6%
Calgary	331	878	165%
Toronto	1853	4165	126%
Hamilton	153	204	33%
Ottawa	206	556	170%
Montreal	770	1187	54%
Quebec City	118	148	25%
TOTAL – seven cities	3831	7562	97%

Table 4 – Spending on housing by Canada, provinces and territories

	1993-1994 (\$ millions)	1999-2000 (\$ millions)	Dollar change	Percent change
Newfoundland	18.1	8.0	-10.1	-55.8
Prince Edward Island	2.3	3.2	+0.9	+39.1
Nova Scotia	24.2	14.3	-9.9	-40.9
New Brunswick	32.7	31.8	-0.9	-2.8
Quebec	286.3	288.3	+2	+0.7
Ontario	1,140.9	837.1	-303.8	-26.6
Manitoba	46.6	43.2	-3.4	-7.3
Saskatchewan	43.1	40.5	-2.6	-6.0
Alberta	287.3	93.2	-194.1	-67.6
British Columbia	83.4	90.9	+7.5	+9.0
NWT / Nunavut	69.7	114.4	+44.7	+64.1
Yukon	4.9	11.1	+6.2	+126.5
Total – provinces, territories	2,039.5	1,576.0	-463.5	-22.7
Canada (CMHC)	1,944.9	1,927.9	-17	-0.9
Total – all Canada	3,984.4	3,503.9	-480.5	-12.1

Source: CMHC, 2001

July 2002

Can Canada Afford to Help Cities, Provide Social Housing, and End Homelessness? Why Are Provincial Governments Doing So Little?

Notes for discussion

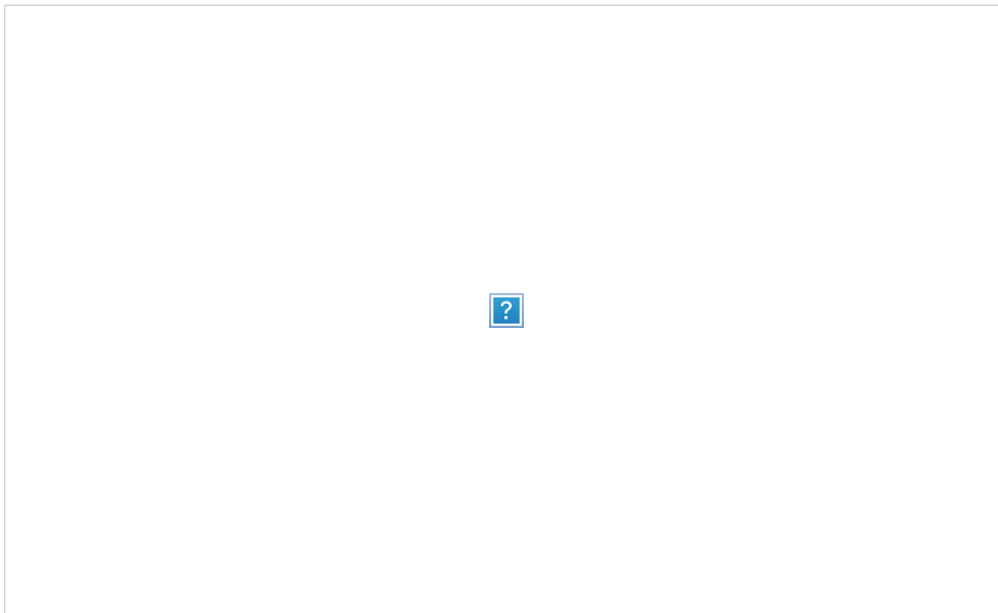
J.D. Hulchanski
Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto
July 2002

Canada's Financial Status as of 2001

The *Annual Financial Report of the Government of Canada, Fiscal Year 2000-2001* and the *Fiscal Reference Tables* (published in September 2001) place current expenditures and revenues in the context of 20- and 40-year series of annual public finance data together with selected comparisons to G-7 nations. Most of the data is also provided in a format (as a percentage of GDP) that allows for easy comparison of different years, making the identification of trends possible without worrying about adjustments for inflation (constant/current dollars).

How financially sound and secure is Canada as a nation? The numbers are impressive.

- *The \$36 Billion Budget Surplus.* There have been four consecutive budget surpluses for the first time since the late 1940s. The most recent was \$17.1 billion in 2000-01. The four-year total budget surplus is \$35.8 Billion.
- *The \$17 Billion Pay Down on the Public Debt.* In September 2001 Paul Martin announced the largest ever pay down made on Canada's public debt: \$17.1 billion during 2000-01. As a result of series of such pay downs over the past four years the net public debt as a percentage of the economy (GDP) is now 52% compared to its peak of 71% in 1995-96. Annual expenditure on financing the public debt has, as a result, fallen from a peak of 6.2% of GDP in 1990-91 to 4% of GDP in 2000-01. This is the lowest level in twenty years.
- *The \$2.5 Billion annual savings on public debt interest payments.* The smaller debt means annual savings on interest payments on the debt, something the finance minister refers to as the 'fiscal dividend.' The net interest savings are now about now about \$2.5 billion per year.
- *The \$100 Billion in tax cuts announced in the February 2000 budget.* The country was in such good shape financially that the Minister of Finance, several months before the federal election, announced the largest ever tax cut in Canadian history. The tax cuts began in 2001 and add up to \$100 billion over a five-year period.
- *The 15% of GDP spent by the federal government – down from 24%.* Federal Government spending is now 15% of GDP – down from 24%. In addition, the government is now spending a much smaller share of the GDP than it has for decades. Total federal budgetary expenditures are now 15% of GDP compared to 24% two decades ago. (See graph below.)



Source: Canada, Dept. of Finance, *Fiscal Reference Tables*, Sept. 2001, Table 8.

Federal transfer Payments to the Provinces and Territories

Federal cash transfers to the provinces and territories have been falling dramatically. Over the past twenty years there are three distinct periods.

1. From 1980 to 1986, the share of federal expenditures that was transferred to the provinces and territories ranged between 4% and 4.6% of GDP.
2. From 1987 to 1995 the range was between 3.7% and 3.9%.
3. From 1996 to the present, federal transfers have been 2.7% to 2.9% of GDP.

In short, huge piles of money that were once transferred to provinces and territories were unilaterally withdrawn. The money mainly helped pay for health, education and welfare.

Another way of looking at these cuts is to examine the share of total budget revenues that federal cash transfers represent. In Ontario, for example, during the first period (1980 to 1986) an average of 17% of provincial revenues came in the form of federal cash transfers. During the second period (1987-1995) this had fallen to an annual average of 13.4%. By the third period (1996-2001), only 9.3% of Ontario's budget revenues came from federal cash transfers.

The cuts in the second and third periods resulted in the termination of the Established Programs Financing (EPF) approach to federal transfers that was introduced in 1977, as well as the Canada Assistance Plan that was introduced in 1966.

Under the EPF provinces received 13.5 personal income tax (PIT) tax points and 1 corporate income tax (CIT) equalized tax point, plus a cash transfer. The value of tax points would grow as the economy expanded, and the cash transfer was escalated by GNP per capita growth. Entitlements were distributed equally on a per capita basis (i.e., no distinction between 'have' and 'have-not' provinces).

There were a number of changes in this formula but the most dramatic began in 1986, when the EPF growth rate was reduced from GNP to GNP -2%. Just after the 1988 election the Mulroney government further reduced the EPF growth rate to GNP -3% and then in 1990 imposed a freeze on any further growth. The freeze included federal transfers under the Canada Assistance Plan (transfers for providing cash assistance to

low-income Canadians). In addition to the temporary freeze further cuts were introduced for the three 'have' provinces (B.C., Alberta and Ontario).

Unfair distribution of the impacts of federal budget cuts

*Back in 1990, just as the last recession was taking hold, the Mulroney government put a cap on the amount it would contribute to supporting the needy in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. Traditionally, Ottawa paid 50 per cent of the cost of welfare, the provinces paid 30 per cent and cities made up the final 20 per cent. But just as the welfare rolls began to shoot up - in Toronto they doubled - Mulroney started spending less on welfare. In a couple of years, the federal contribution had fallen from 50 per cent of the cost of welfare to less than 30 per cent. The Chrétien government, elected in 1993, continued the Mulroney tradition of stinginess to the needy. – David Lewis Stein, "Analysis; Cities push Ottawa to help the homeless," *The Toronto Star*, April 5, 1999*

The federal and provincial budget cuts did not affect all income groups equally. How did provinces respond to the loss of significant federal revenue? Raise taxes? Some did, for a while. Cut spending programs that are popular with the middle-class voter (health care, education, environment)? Some tried this, but not for long. The easiest response was the most common: introduce significant cuts in support for poor people. They don't vote at the same rate as others and when they do, they may not vote for the two major parties.

Severe cuts in income support levels begin in Alberta in 1993. Until that time, most jurisdictions periodically increased their welfare rates. In October 1993 Alberta cut most shelter allowance benefits by \$50 a month, and stopped paying damage deposits for welfare recipients. In 1994 Manitoba reduced by 5.8% the maximum shelter rate for employable single people on welfare. In 1994 PEI reduced by 36% the maximum shelter allowance for employable singles. In 1995 Ontario cut basic social assistance benefits for employable single persons and couples by 21.6% (with equal cut to shelter allowance; e.g., dropping the shelter allowance maximum from \$414 to \$325 per month). In 1996 Nova Scotia reduced shelter allowances for the same group by 36%, from \$350 to \$225 a month. By the late 1990s most jurisdictions had either reduced or froze benefit rates for the poorest and most disadvantaged people in Canada. According to the National Welfare Council, from 1986 to 1995, of 48 welfare client groups (4 client categories in each of 12 jurisdictions) tracked by the NCW, 31 (65 percent) saw the real purchasing power of their benefits decline over this eight-year period. (Prince, 1998:838-844)

The Mulroney government cuts in transfer payments to the provinces, though huge (equal to about one-half of a percent of the GDP annually), were in fact quite modest compared to the Chrétien government (equal to a further one percent of GDP annually). Just after the 1993 election both CAP and EPF transfers were frozen at 1993 levels until in 1996-97. Then the 1995 federal Budget announced that EPF and CAP were to be scrapped and replaced by the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) block fund system starting in 1996-97.

This is the most significant change in both federal transfer policy and federal social welfare policy in 30 years. CAP and EPF replaced with a single, substantially smaller block fund, with fewer federal conditions attached, in the name of federal restraint and 'flexible federalism.' From 1995-96, the final fiscal year of CAP and EPF, to 1999-2000, the fourth year of the CHST, total federal cash transfers for these strategic policy areas dropped by \$7.4 billion, or 40 percent. (Prince, 1998:828)

The demise of the Canada Assistance Plan CAP represents the loss of the federal government's main policy instrument for providing (through the provincial and territorial welfare systems) shelter assistance and services for many low-income Canadians. The offloading of costs and the removal of most conditions mean that any federal influence on affordable housing for low-income households through the welfare system is gone. Further, with the CHST, federal leadership in welfare is effectively dead.

As a result of the cuts to social expenditures, the purchasing power of social assistance benefits was lower in 2001 than in 1986, and substantially lower than the peak amounts over the 15 year period (National Council of Welfare, 2002). Table 1 below provides a summary for four provinces. The 2001 rates are twenty to forty percent lower than the peak rates in these four provinces.

Table 1: **Welfare Benefits in Four of the Largest Provinces, 1986 to 2001**
Couple with two children (in constant 2001 dollars)

	1986	Peak (year)	2001	2001 as a % of Peak
Ontario	\$17,060	\$22,596 (1992)	\$13,452	60%
Quebec	\$15,573	\$15,650 (1993)	\$12,041	77%
Alberta	\$19,690	\$19,690 (1986)	\$13,425	68%
B.C.	\$15,891	\$17,368 (1994)	\$13,534	78%

Source: National Council of Welfare (2002) *Welfare Incomes, 2000 and 2001*, Ottawa, Table 5A

Even if families on social assistance spend 50% of their benefits on rent (about \$7,000 per year), this amounts to only \$580 per month for rent. There are very few one bedroom apartments available in the larger cities for that amount of money. Housing appropriate for families is much more expensive.

It was during this fifteen-year period that mass homelessness emerged – a form of severe destitution that includes being unhoused. The number of people affected keeps rising and the problem is not limited to the large cities. All lower-income Canadians have been affected by these federal and provincial funding cuts.

Canada's Total Social Spending Compared to Other Western Nations

Canada's net social spending has been falling dramatically. In its most recent comparative assessment of social spending in fifteen countries, Canada ranks near the bottom. In addition, Canada's 1997 spending level, 18.9% of GDP, is a sharp decline from the 1995 level of 20.4% of GDP. No other country in the OECD survey had such a sharp cut in net social spending.

“Total social expenditure” is defined in the OECD research as the provision by public and private institutions of benefits to, and financial contributions targeted at, households and individuals in order to provide support during circumstances that adversely affect their welfare.

These benefits can be cash transfers, or can be the direct (in-kind) provision of goods and services. Tax system benefits are included. It is ‘net’ meaning after tax (the benefits an individual or household receives minus any tax they pay on the benefits).

The aim is to provide a comparable measure for that part of an economy's domestic production that is allocated to people in need of social benefits. It is an indicator of the share of resources a nation devoted to meeting social need in 1997 (the latest available data). Data limitations currently preclude analysis of all OECD countries.



Source: Willem Adema, *Net Social Expenditure*, 2nd Edition, Labour Market and Social Policy - Occasional Papers No. 52, Paris: OECD. August 2001.

Canada, therefore, can do better. The problem is not one of Canada doing too much for its citizens and thereby potentially affecting the country's competitive situation. Too much has been stripped from one group of Canadians – lower income households. The burden of fighting the deficit was not equally shared.

Social Implications of Federal and Provincial Fiscal Policies

In nearly every major urban region, the Task Force heard that the shortage of affordable housing is one of the biggest challenges affecting economic competitiveness and quality of life. Municipal governments and housing providers cannot meet the demand for affordable housing and emergency shelter. As more and more people migrate to cities, the pressure to find suitable accommodation has a ripple effect on society as a whole. As competition for existing housing stock intensifies, tenants at the lower end of the market increasingly have no choice but to turn to shelters or remain in already overcrowded conditions. – Interim Report of the Prime Minister's Caucus Task Force on Urban Issues, April 2002, pp. 17-18

The major policy and program changes over the past twenty years mean that the right to adequate housing, the right to an adequate standard of living, and even the right to live, depends upon having enough money. The income and wealth gap between rich and poor has increased over the past fifteen years. In Canada, if you have little or no money you have no housing. If you have no housing, your physical and mental health suffers, and you may die. Federal and provincial policies have played a significant role in causing severe housing problems and homelessness and in allowing them to continue and worsen. They can play a significant role in reversing these trends. The social, economic and quality of life implications of fiscal policies tend to be concentrated in our cities and are a major reason for the urban crisis that is now gaining widespread public recognition.

It cannot be claimed that the government lacked knowledge about the problem and/or did not know what to do about it. One of the best blueprints for addressing Canada's housing problems, including ending homelessness, is contained in a 50-page report written in 1990 by Paul Martin, the former Minister of Finance. The report is called *Finding Room: Housing Solutions for the Future*. (The full text is available at: <http://www.housingagain.web.net>.)

Released after an extensive national consultation, the report contains 25 recommendations to improve the lot

of Canada's houseless population, aboriginal people, renters and low-income homeowners. The report states:

"The federal role in housing must not be a residual one. The connection between housing and other aspects of both social and economic policy means that the federal government must take a lead role.... Our market housing system has not responded adequately to all of society's needs.... The Task Force believes that ... all Canadians have the right to decent housing, in decent surroundings, at affordable prices."

This is one of the rare studies where the author, shortly after releasing the report, was in a position to implement it (he became Canada's finance minister in 1993), but refused to do so.

The death in early February 1999 of "Al", a homeless man who was sleeping on a heating grate directly under the office of Ontario Premier Mike Harris, along with the death later the same month of Lynn Bluecloud, a homeless woman who was five months pregnant, who died within sight of the Parliament buildings in Ottawa, dramatically underline the consequences of the governments' actions and inactions. There are concrete identifiable 'homeless making processes' and 'homeless making policies' at work in Canada.

A country as wealthy as Canada can respond to the macro-economic conditions and personal life circumstances of people who become houseless. Canada does not have to let its cities and its lower-income neighbourhoods decline, as happened in the United States. No Canadians 'need' to become houseless, penniless and, for those with mental health and substance abuse problems, supportless. The federal, provincial and territorial governments have the authority and the resources to ensure respect for and the implementation of all human rights of all Canadians. The current conditions faced by people who become houseless can be changed and/or ameliorated rather quickly. The processes and policies that produce homelessness are well known and a wide variety of remedial forms of action are available. There is a vast array of policy instruments available and they are technically and financially feasible.

When the United Nations issued its highly critical 1998 report on Canada's compliance with social and economic rights, it did note, under 'positive aspects,' that the UN's Human Development Index (HDI) ranks Canada at the top, as long as it excludes poverty measures.

"The Committee notes that for the last five years, Canada has been ranked at the top of the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI indicates that, on average, Canadians enjoy a singularly high standard of living and that Canada has the capacity to achieve a high level of respect for all Covenant rights. That this has not yet been achieved is reflected in the fact that UNDP's Human Poverty Index ranks Canada tenth on the list for industrialized countries." (para. 3)

The Committee then added that "Canada has the capacity to achieve a high level of respect for all Covenant rights." As the Department of Finance's own fiscal data indicates, outlined at the start of this paper, the UN committee was correct.

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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December 1998

Homeless People v. Government of Canada & Government of Ontario

People's Court, Toronto Division

All Saints Church, Dundas and Sherbourne

December 8, 1998, 10 a.m.

Presiding judges: John Andras, Gian Mura

Lawyer for the prosecution: Peter Rosenthal

Court Reporter: Philippa Campsie

Beric German welcomed the jury and introduced the participants. John Andras explained that although the court has no legal standing, witnesses would be examined under oath. Kira Heineck read the indictment.

THE ACCUSED STAND CHARGED:

1. THAT they, the said governments of Canada and of Ontario, in Toronto and in Ottawa, between the first day of January 1993, and the seventh day of December 1998, inclusive, enacted legislation and adopted policies that resulted in decreased availability of affordable and supportive housing and created increased homelessness, and thereby contravened paragraph 1 of Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Political Rights.
2. AND FURTHER THAT they, the said governments of Canada and of Ontario, in Toronto and in Ottawa, between the first day of January 1993, and the seventh day of December 1998, inclusive, failed to take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of the right of everyone to adequate housing, contrary to paragraph 1 of Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Political Rights.
3. AND FURTHER THAT they, the said governments of Canada and of Ontario, between the first day of January 1993, and the seventh day of December 1998, inclusive, prioritized the housing interests of middle and upper-class persons over those of the poor, and thereby discriminated against the poor, contrary to section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
4. AND FURTHER THAT the said Government of Ontario, between the first day of January 1993, and the seventh day of December 1998, inclusive, cut payments for social assistance to a level below that required to maintain an adequate standard of living, contrary to paragraph 1 of section 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Peter Rosenthal told the court that the defendants had failed to appear.

John Andras submitted into evidence a letter that had been sent to David Collenette, federal minister responsible for the Greater Toronto Area, inviting him to send a representative to defend the Government of Canada in court. He also stated that he had sent messages to Cameron McKinnon, executive assistant to the Premier of Ontario, and Jack Carroll, chairman of the Red Ribbon Task Force on Homelessness, asking them

to send representatives to defend the Government of Ontario. These documents were entered into the evidence as Exhibits 1 and 2. The government had sent a written response but had sent no representatives to the court. John Andras therefore entered a plea of not guilty on behalf of both governments and asked the lawyer for the prosecution to proceed.

Peter Rosenthal called the first witness, **David Hulchanski**, to the stand.

David Hulchanski, a professor in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto, has conducted research on housing and homelessness for about 20 years. He entered the following documents into evidence:

Exhibit 3: A copy of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, signed 50 years ago by Canada and other nations. Professor Hulchanski drew the attention of the court to article 25:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Exhibit 4: The **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**, which came into force January 3, 1976. This covenant was designed to give legal force to the provisions contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Professor Hulchanski drew the attention of the court to article 11:

The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.

Exhibit 5: **General comments by the United Nations High Commissioner on the right to adequate housing**. This is a legal opinion that defined what is meant by the right to housing. This opinion states that "adequate housing" can be defined by:

- Legal security of tenure
- Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure
- Affordability
- Habitability
- Accessibility
- Location
- Cultural adequacy

These comments have been supplemented by legal opinions concerning what constitutes a violation of article 11, namely:

- adoption of legislation or policies clearly inconsistent with housing rights obligations, particularly when these result in homelessness, greater levels of inadequate housing, the inability of persons to pay for housing and so forth;
- repealing legislation consistent with, and in support of, housing rights, unless obviously outdated or replaced with equally or more consistent laws;
- unreasonable reductions in public expenditures on housing and other related areas, in the

absence of adequate compensatory measures;

- overtly prioritizing the housing interests of high-income groups when significant portions of society live without their housing rights having been achieved;
- acts of racial or other forms of discrimination in the housing sphere.

Exhibit 6: A document titled **New Rental Housing: Why Don't They Build Some?** by David Hulchanski. This is a fact sheet on the economics of housing and "rental market failure." The document notes that in 1992, there were 15,700 social housing starts and 2,300 private rental housing starts; in 1997, there were no social housing starts and 252 private rental housing starts. The cutbacks to the housing sector amount to \$1.2 billion. The document includes an excerpt from the provincial Conservative's policy document, *The Common Sense Revolution*:

We will end the public housing boondoggle that profits only the large property developers and return to a shelter subsidy program for all Ontarians who need help in affording a decent level of shelter. This will eliminate the inefficiencies of government-owned and -operated housing. By spending money on people instead of bricks and mortar, we will be in a position to eliminate the two-year waiting list for affordable housing. [underlining added]

Professor Hulchanski reminded the court that this promise has not been implemented.

Exhibit 7: A document titled **Cutting and Gutting Housing Programs, Policy and Legislation: The Record of the Harris Government since 1995**. This documents points out six "housing failures" of the provincial Conservative government:

1. Declining Ontario government housing spending;
2. End of construction of new co-op and non-profit housing;
3. Cuts to shelter allowances for welfare recipients;
4. Cuts in operating funding to existing co-op and non-profit housing;
5. Downloading of provincial social housing programs to municipalities;
6. Gutting of tenant protection laws.

Exhibit 8: A **Memorandum from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada**, listing the co-op and non-profit projects throughout Ontario that were cancelled by the provincial Conservative government. According to the memorandum, 17,000 units of housing, representing 45,000 potential tenants, were cancelled. Professor Hulchanski presented the list in the form of a scroll which, when unrolled, stretched from one side of the court to the other.

Exhibit 9: **Concluding Observations of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**, Canada, 4 December 1998. This is the third report on Canada's compliance with the Covenant, which is reviewed every five years. Professor Hulchanski drew the court's attention to excerpts from this report, which had been written in large letters and posted on the walls of the court:

24. The Committee is gravely concerned that such a wealthy country as Canada has allowed the problem of homelessness and inadequate housing to grow to such proportions that the mayors of Canada's ten largest cities have now declared homelessness a national disaster.

33. The Committee is perturbed to hear that the number of food banks has almost doubled between 1989 and 1997 in Canada and are able to meet only a fraction of the increased needs of the poor.

34. The Committee is concerned that the State Party did not take into account the Committee's 1993 major concerns and recommendations when it adopted policies at federal, provincial and territorial levels which exacerbated poverty and homelessness among vulnerable groups during a time of strong economic growth and increasing affluence.

35. The Committee is concerned at the crisis level of homelessness among youth and young families. According to information received from the National Council of Welfare, over 90% of single mothers under 25 live in poverty. Unemployment and under-employment rates are also significantly higher among youth than among the general population.

Professor Hulchanski noted that the Committee's report on Canada was longer and more harsh than its reports on other nations that had signed the Covenant.

Peter Rosenthal then called **Jacqueline**, the second witness, to the stand.

Jacqueline testified that she had been homeless for six months. Her landlord had defaulted on his mortgage and left Toronto. The sheriff had evicted the tenants of the house where she was living. She is now living in a shelter, because she cannot afford first and last month's rent on a room or apartment in another building. She described affordable housing as "impossible to find" and said that she had been told that she had to find housing on her own; there was no one to help her. She stated that she did not consider the shelter a satisfactory substitute for housing, because of the lack of privacy and the overcrowding.

Peter Rosenthal called the third witness, **Laura Beard**, to the stand.

Laura Beard described the situation of a friend of hers who had had a nervous breakdown and become homeless as a result. He had been in mental health institutions and been discharged to the street, without any support. He had become a criminal in order to get medical attention, because only by breaking the law could he get help and temporary shelter. Ms Beard, with the help of Street Health had gone to court on his behalf and had finally succeeded in finding housing for him.

Peter Rosenthal called **Paula Dolezal**, the fourth witness, to the stand.

Paula Dolezal stated that she was a mental health outreach worker with Street Health and that she had previously worked at StreetCity. She works with homeless people who have mental health problems. In her opinion, the situation of homeless people is worsening. She cited the low vacancy rate at places such as StreetCity and the lack of facilities for people with addictions. She said that the case described by Laura Beard was unusual only in the way it ended: most people in a similar situation do not find housing or have friends in a position to help them.

Peter Rosenthal called the fifth witness, **Lenny Abramowicz**, to the stand.

Lenny Abramowicz identified himself as director of Neighbourhood Legal Services. At this agency, the staff deal with problems related to social assistance and to landlord-tenant relations. Mr Abramowicz testified that the so-called *Tenant Protection Act* (known to many as the Tenant Rejection Act or the Landlord Protection Act), which became law in June 1998, would have the effect of increasing homelessness. The TPA repealed rent control legislation, and allowed landlords to raise rents as high as they wished when an apartment became vacant. According to CMHC statistics, between October 1997 and October 1998, the average increase in rents had been 7%. Since this period included only 5 months of "vacancy de-control," Mr Abramowicz suggested that the next 12 months might see increases of 10% or more in average rents. He added that the TPA gave landlords an incentive to kick tenants out of apartments.

Mr Abramowicz further testified that the TPA had abolished the *Rental Housing Protection Act*, which

controlled the conversion of rental properties to condominiums or owner-occupied properties. He also explained that the current regulations for evictions give tenants only five days in which to file a letter opposing eviction and leave little time for negotiating a compromise with the landlord. He stated that there is no guarantee that the additional money that landlords will get in higher rents will be re-invested in housing. The only guarantee, he stated, is that homelessness will increase.

Peter Rosenthal called **Billy**, the sixth witness, to the stand.

Billy testified that he had been homeless since October 1998. He had had a job at Beaver Foods but had been injured on the job and was currently suffering from cancer. He was also ill from sleeping outdoors. He had lost his housing after coming into conflict with his landlord. He has since been trying to find alternative housing, but without success. He found hostels difficult because he has hypersensitive hearing and the noise bothers him and because they were too rowdy.

Peter Rosenthal called the seventh witness, **Laura Cowan**, to the stand.

Laura Cowan identified herself as director of Street Health, where she has worked for four years. She stated that the situation of homeless people has deteriorated in the past few years. She has seen an increase of 56% in the number of people using the Street Health clinics over the period 1995 to 1997, which she attributes to the cuts to welfare rates of 21.6% in fall 1995. These cuts led to evictions as people became unable to pay rent. Street Health also spends more time helping homeless people get identification so that they can get medical help: in 1994, this service cost Street Health \$10,000; in 1998, the service cost \$40,000.

Ms Cowan stressed that homelessness affects health and cited a Street Health study, in which 500 people were interviewed about their health needs. The study found that respiratory problems, skin diseases, infestations such as lice or scabies, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis are caused or aggravated by homelessness. Overcrowded shelters also spread infections such as influenza. She also cited a study by Dr. Stephen Hwang of St. Michael's Hospital that looked at the death rates of homeless people in several cities, and found that homeless men between the ages of 16 and 24 were six times more likely to die than young men in the general population.

Peter Rosenthal called the eighth witness, **Cheryl White**, to the stand.

Cheryl White identified herself as coordinator of the HIV/AIDS harm-reduction program of the mental health facility at 1001 Queen West. She testified that Canada, in particular Vancouver, has the highest rates of HIV infection through intravenous drug use in the world and extremely high rates of Hepatitis-C infection in people who inject drugs. She pointed out that municipal bylaws against squeegeeing or panhandling force people to move from city to city in an attempt to find ways to make money and survive. In her opinion, "Homelessness means death for drug users." Drug users cannot benefit from harm-reduction strategies, which depend on stable housing. Drug users are forced to inject themselves in public places, which are generally unsanitary. They avoid hostels where drugs and alcohol are prohibited. This problem particularly affects Toronto's Aboriginal population.

Peter Rosenthal called the ninth witness, **Bob Rose**, to the stand.

Bob Rose identified himself as a worker at the Parkdale Activity and Recreation Centre (PARC). He deals with people who are homeless and those who live in inadequate housing, which he described as "the last stop before people end up on the street." He testified that after the fire at 1495 Queen Street, which killed two people and left 47 people homeless, housing workers struggled for three months to find replacement housing for the former tenants. Because the fire was widely reported in the media, some former tenants were allowed to jump to the top of the list of 47,000 people who are waiting for public housing. This meant that others on

the list would have to wait even longer for housing. Mr Rose said that it is extremely difficult to find housing for homeless people and that landlords are becoming increasingly selective in admitting tenants. This means that psychiatric survivors are at a disadvantage in the housing market and are usually passed over.

Peter Rosenthal called **Ann Fitzpatrick**, the tenth and final witness, to the stand.

Ann Fitzpatrick identified herself as a community worker for the Children's Aid Society, where she has worked for 13 years. She described the current situation for children and families as "devastating." She testified that in the past few years, there has been an increase of about 30% in the number of families who have doubled up with friends or family, or become homeless. Most shelters for families in Toronto are motels on Kingston Road in Scarborough, where tiny room house up to 8 people each.

Ms. Fitzpatrick recalled that in 1985, families might stay in a shelter for six weeks but now they may stay for a year or more, because of the lack of alternative housing for them. When children are uprooted in this way, they often become depressed or express their unhappiness in acting out. This in turn causes stress for the parents. Some parents ask if their children can be taken into care; others may be stressed to the point at which they abuse their children. There is a 10-year waiting list for family housing.

Ms Fitzpatrick entered two documents into evidence:

Exhibit 11: The **Report of the Children's Aid Society to the United Nations Committee** investigating Canada's compliance with the terms of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The report concludes:

We are alarmed by the trends that continue to place children, youth and families at risk for growing economic and social disadvantage. If we don't put children and their parents first in terms of a social investment to guarantee rights to housing, income, food and support programs we will perpetuate a costly cycle of disadvantage.

Exhibit 12: "**Housing as a Factor in Admissions of Children to Temporary Care: A Survey**" by Miriam Cohen-Schlanger, Ann Fitzpatrick, J. David Hulchanski and Dennis Raphael, *Child Welfare*, vol. 74, no. 3, pages 548-62. This report found that in 18.4% of the cases studied, the family's housing situation was one of the factors that resulted in children being placed in care and that in 8.6% of the cases, the lack of housing delayed the child's return home.

This testimony concluded the case for the prosecution.

John Andras, on behalf of the government read excerpts from a document by Jack Carroll, parliamentary assistant to the Department of Community and Social Services and chair of the Red Ribbon Task Force on Homelessness created by the government of Ontario. The document in question was not for distribution.

In this document, the provincial government stated that it is concerned about homelessness and its impact on family and community life. It claims that it is taking steps to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Homelessness. The government further stated that it spends \$100 million on the immediate needs of homeless people and pays 80% of the costs of shelters and hostels. The government is trying to reduce the incidence of homelessness in the long term through initiatives such as Healthy Babies, Healthy Children; Better Beginnings, Better Futures; or Making Services Work for People. The government further stated that it is planning mental health reform to provide better supports for people with mental illness and that employment opportunities will be created through the Ontario Works program. The document also stated that the government believes that "the private sector always has and always will provide the vast majority of affordable housing for low-income Ontarians."

The document states that the government has committed \$10 million in new funding to meet the needs of homeless people, \$4.2 to municipalities for innovative solutions addressing homelessness (Toronto's Homelessness Initiatives Fund comes from this money), \$2.5 million for new front-line mental health outreach programs, and \$3 million in new funding to provide health services to homeless people who don't have health cards. Toronto has been given \$1 million for new initiatives to reduce homelessness.

This document, along with background documents, were not entered as exhibits into evidence, in accordance with the wishes of the provincial government.

Peter Rosenthal summed up the case for the prosecution.

In relation to the first count, he cited the evidence provided by David Hulchanski and others relating to cuts to social housing in 1995 and the lack of compensating programs. He stated that the evidence proves beyond any reasonable doubt that the government is guilty as charged.

The second count is related to the first count, and the same evidence proves the government guilty as charged.

The third count relates to the interests of middle and upper class people. Mr. Rosenthal noted that little had been entered into evidence regarding housing for middle and upper class people and suggested that the prosecution had not made a complete case for this count.

The fourth count relates to cuts to social assistance. The evidence proves beyond a reasonable doubt that the cuts to social assistance have directly contributed to homelessness in Toronto and have contravened the provisions of the Covenant of Economic, Cultural and Social Rights.

The Clerk of the Court re-read the four indictments and asked the jury how it found for each count.

Count 1: guilty as charged (one dissenting vote)

Count 2: guilty as charged (one dissenting vote)

Count 3: guilty as charged (unanimous)

Count 4: guilty as charged (unanimous)

John Andras concluded the proceedings by giving the government an opportunity to respond to the verdict by producing, by January 29, 1999, a plan to respond to homelessness, eliminate its occurrence and prevent it from recurring.

Beric German added that the governments named in the trial should be forced to comply with the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights or be removed from office.

The proceedings concluded at 11:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Philippa Campsie, Court Reporter

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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February 17, 2002

Toronto City Council: Where Are Your Priorities?

People are suffering. Some are dying.

QUESTION:

Are you about to write a blank check for an ill prepared elite group who will divert and focus civic energy and resources into a sporting event?

TDRC presentation to Toronto City Council On the Olympic Bid 17 February 2000

1. Housing and homelessness must be the key priority for City Council.
2. The Olympics will divert scarce public resources and civic attention away from this priority.
3. The social impact of the Olympics will make the affordable housing and homelessness situation worse.
4. First things first: housing and homelessness, then fun and games and waterfront gentrification.

Rule 40 – Liabilities

"Rule 40 (Liabilities) - The NOC (National Olympic Committee - or Canadian Olympic Association), the OCOG (Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games - or TO-Bid) and the host city are jointly and severally liable for all commitments entered into individually or collectively concerning the organization and staging of the Olympic Games, excluding the financial responsibility for the organization and staging of such Games, which shall be entirely assumed jointly and severally by the host city and the OCOG, without prejudice to any liability of any other party, particularly as may result from any guarantee given pursuant to Rule 37, paragraph 5. The IOC (International Olympic Committee) shall have no financial responsibility whatsoever in respect thereof."

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1. Your October 1998 Emergency Declaration
2. Homelessness is a Serious Human Rights Violation
3. Why is there NO PROGRESS?
4. How can you support a rushed, ill-managed and deceitful bid? They will poop and we will scoop.
5. Why rush? Why choose the wrong priority at this time in our civic history?

1. Your October 1998 Emergency Declaration

Following your endorsement of the emergency declaration, many other city councils, the Big City Mayor's Caucus of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, many local and national organizations, and thousands of individual Canadian citizens have also demanded an end to the growing shame of mass homelessness.

"That the Provincial and Federal Governments be requested to declare homelessness a national disaster requiring emergency humanitarian relief and be urged to immediately develop and implement a National Homelessness Relief and Prevention Strategy using disaster relief funds, both to provide the homeless with immediate health protection and housing and to prevent further homelessness."

We have all been asking ourselves these questions:

- Why are there so many (or any) houseless destitute people in Toronto? Did the weather or an earthquake cause the problem? Did they all choose to move out of their houses, give up their jobs, and live on the streets?
- Why is this human crisis not treated the same as other crises where people lose their housing and have their family and community networks disrupted, like the ice storm in Quebec and Eastern Ontario, or like the floods in Manitoba?
- Why are governments not responding to the physical and mental harm, including death, caused by being homeless?
- Why are many of the most influential business and civic leaders in Toronto and other cities ignoring this human tragedy, with some pursuing priorities that only divert attention and worsen the situation?
- Why are many (most?) elected, business and civic leaders ignoring the spread of disease such as tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and hepatitis?
- Why is it that our public officials and business leaders fail to recognize that tens of thousands of people without housing and without adequate food and health care constitutes one of the largest and most serious national disasters that our city and our country has ever faced?

A recent study by Dr. Stephen Huang of St. Michael's Hospital and the University of Toronto's Medical School found that homeless men in Toronto aged 18-24 had a mortality rate 8 times greater than the general population and men aged 25-44 had a mortality rate 4 times as higher. Is this acceptable to you, our elected leaders?

Is this acceptable to the Toronto bid leaders, both the public group and the 'backroom boys'?

Disasters, whether natural or human-made, have similar consequences.

2. Homelessness is a Serious Human Rights Violation

All human rights violations are acts that disregard human dignity and the rule of law.

The moral and ethical codes of the World's religions, international law, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and federal and provincial human rights legislation, oblige Canadians and Canadian governments to refrain from acts, omissions, or other measures that result in violations of human rights.

The very existence of people who do not have any housing is by itself a most serious human rights violation.

In December 4, 1998 the United Nation's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Geneva, in

its review of Canada's compliance, issued its strongest criticism ever of any Western nation's human rights record.

This severe criticism of Canada reminds all nations that the failure to address and prevent homelessness is a most serious human rights violation.

Eight paragraphs in the Committee's report on Canada refer to homelessness. One refers to the Toronto Disaster Relief's national disaster declaration.

24. The Committee is gravely concerned that such a wealthy country as Canada has allowed the problem of homelessness and inadequate housing to grow to such proportions that the mayors of Canada's ten largest cities have now declared homelessness a national disaster.

34. The Committee is concerned that the State Party did not take into account the Committee's 1993 major concerns and recommendations when it adopted policies at federal, provincial and territorial levels which exacerbated poverty and homelessness among vulnerable groups during a time of strong economic growth and increasing affluence.

In March 1999 the TDRC submitted a detailed report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee. This is the other of the two major human rights review committees within the UN. The TDRC report had a clear and blunt title:

Death on the Streets of Canada: A Report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee Regarding Compliance with Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by Canada.

This report helped draw the UN Committee's attention to homelessness, resulting in the following comment in the Committee's final report on Canada:

"12. The Committee is concerned that homelessness has led to serious health problems and even to death. The Committee recommends that the State party take positive measures required by article 6 to address this serious problem."

Societies with homeless people amidst great prosperity have established and are maintaining homeless-creating processes - day-to-day 'normal' mechanisms which result in people becoming unhoused and remaining unhoused, often for long periods of time. These are dehousing processes. The most basic human rights of a group of people within our communities are being violated.

We cannot sit idly by and let this misery and death continue. The time to act is now.

Yet, very little is happening. Instead, it seems, we have other more pressing priorities.

3. Why is there NO PROGRESS?

There are now more homeless men, women, children and families in our city. Why?

Why are we as a society unable to take immediate and appropriate action leading to the steady decline in the number of people affected by this human-made public policy disaster?

Why is such a wealthy city unable to focus our combined resources and political clout with senior levels of government and make progress?

The solution is not difficult. No more research is needed to discover what Toronto's homeless people need.

The solution to homelessness – its prevention and eventual elimination -- is:

1. Housing: all homeless people require adequate and appropriate housing they can afford.
2. Income: all homeless people require enough money to live on (e.g., a job, job training, adequate pension or social assistance).
3. Support Services: some homeless people require support services.

Without a safe, secure and adequate place to live, enough money to get by on, all the money we are spending on expensive services to people without a place to live is money down the drain.

It is easy to endorse declarations. We are pleased with the many small but important measures this City Council has implemented. We all know it is not enough. We all know that City Council by itself cannot make real progress.

We are very disappointed with the lack of response of most of Toronto's business leaders and others outside Council who are active, influential and effective 'behind the scenes' leaders.

There is no concerted leadership from the most powerful, experienced and well-off within our community.

They are silent on the great moral and ethical issue of our day. Some even have priorities that contribute to the problem by diverting time and energy elsewhere.

4. How can you support a rushed, ill-managed and deceitful bid? They will poop and we will scoop.

Those in Toronto who actively campaign for effective progress in decreasing and preventing homelessness are a relatively small group, getting by with little or no support from the influential civic leaders in our community.

They seem to have other priorities. For some it is a rushed, ill-managed and deceitful bid to host the Olympics.

This is their priority. Is it the City of Toronto's priority?

An unelected group is rushing you, our democratically elected leadership, into writing a blank check.

When difficulties arise, and they will, they as individuals, are free to walk away. They will poop and we will scoop.

They will have their NFL stadium at no expense to themselves. They will have their fat fees as consultants, designers, builders and gentrifiers. The landowners in and around the waterfront site will be particularly happy.

The benefits are theirs. The social costs and the financial costs are ours. The Province will not help us out here.

Who among you on City Council do not believe this to be the case?

It will be City Council's mess – the Toronto property taxpayer's mess – to clean up. These folks are already telling us that. Even the provincial government, as supporters of the bid, are balking at the blank check these folks demand and require. The carefully worded 'tentative' letter they got this week from the Province still leaves the Toronto property taxpayer on the hook.

When the going gets tough, the most well-off among this group will have already moved onto other personal priorities. Greed has no limit for some. Look at the financing of Skydome. Some of the same backroom boys are now back at the trough. And they need and expect your vote.

5. Why rush? Why choose the wrong priority at this time in our civic history?

The TDRC is not opposed to major sporting events or to hosting the Olympics some day.

Progress must be made on the human tragedy we see around us every day. This is the immediate priority.

Progress will only be made when it becomes a focused civic priority.

Progress will only be made when the elected and non-elected civic leadership, and the business community and the grass roots, all act together and make it a priority.

Until then, we are a severely divided city. We lack social cohesion and will spin into further acrimony.

Why rush? What is wrong with a 2012 bid? Start planning now and do it right.

As with your adoption of the Emergency Declaration, which demonstrated to the nation the severity of the problem, we call on you now to make a statement about priorities by refusing to write the blank check.

There will be social costs and social harm if you proceed with this bid. They know that and you know that. In addition, there may well be financial costs and severe neighbourhood and community impacts. The whole city and the country are watching you. What is the City's priority?

The homeless and underhoused in Toronto do not constitute a "special interest group." They seek nothing more than the minimum that human dignity demands.

The TDRC is not asking for favours or charity.

Adequate and affordable housing is not a luxury. Enough money to get by on is not a luxury. Adequate support services are not luxuries.

These basic human rights are being denied to many people in this city at this very moment.

You, the City Council, have the ability to set the civic agenda.

What will it be?

- 1. Housing and homelessness must be the key priority for City Council.**
- 2. The Olympics will divert scarce public resources and civic attention away from this priority.**
- 3. The social impact of the Olympics will make the affordable housing and homelessness situation worse.**
- 4. First things first: housing and homelessness, then fun and games and waterfront gentrification.**

The One Percent Solution

The single most important thing that we as Canadians can do to end homelessness in Toronto and in Canada

is to implement local, provincial and national housing supply and support service strategies. At this point in time, Canada is the only industrialized country not to have a senior level government (federal/provincial) housing policy.

To fund a housing strategy the TDRC proposes the One Percent Solution -- that all levels of government spend an additional one percent of their existing total budgets on housing. We need all of Toronto's civic leadership – government, business and community – to join in this effort.

The One Percent Solution is based on a calculation of the combined spending of all levels of government -- federal, provincial, territorial and municipal. Add up the amount of money all levels of government are spending on housing and it equals about one percent of overall government spending. This money current provides a range of housing supports, including affordable housing for 650,000 households (about 5.5% of the entire country's housing stock).

The One Percent Solution calls for a doubling of this effort. That means, in simple terms, that every government needs to double what it is currently spending on housing. This can be phased in over a three to five year period. The One Percent Solution is not based on one percent of any particular government's spending, but one percent of all governments' spending.

On average, in 1994-95, the federal, provincial and municipal governments of Canada spent \$3.83 billion out of a total of \$358 billion dollar budget on housing.

Introducing the One Percent Solution would not only substantially increase the number of housing units but would also increase the support services for people who need housing. There would be funding for new construction, renovation of existing units and subsidies for people on low incomes.

Hundreds of organizations and institutions across Canada have endorsed the One Percent Solution. The outpouring of letters from individual supporters continues to be overwhelming. We need a more unified and concerted effort here in Toronto

Summing up, The One Percent Solution is:

- Affordable: The 1% Solution is affordable, at about 50 cents per tax payer per day.
- Modest: Set against the huge and growing need of affordable housing and services, the 1 % Solution is a modest but important proposal.
- Mainly 'catch up' spending: in real terms, the 1% Solution is in fact only replacing the huge amount of money cut out of housing and related programs by the federal government since 1984.
- Funding for all three parts of the solution: The funds would supply: (1) adequate housing, (2) adequate support services, and (3) adequate jobs, job training and social assistance – thereby ending mass homelessness in Canada.

'I don't think it'll cost us anything.' Boy, Was Mel Wrong!

by Michael Shapcott, February 15, 2000

"I don't think it'll cost us anything. I think we can do it without costing the city a penny."

Those words, from Toronto Mayor Mel Lastman were reported in the January 17, 1998, Toronto Star. Boy, was he wrong.

Not only has the Toronto Olympic bid already cost taxpayers millions in direct and indirect costs, along with hundreds of millions of dollars if the games are staged here, but the February 15, 2000, Toronto Star reports that taxpayers (provincial ones) will be on the hook for any operating cost overruns.

It's not clear which group of taxpayers - provincial or municipal – will be on the hook for the even bigger capital and infrastructure cost overruns, including the huge soil remediation costs that sank the Ataratiri housing project a few years ago.

Provincial taxpayers won't, apparently, be on the hook for the billion-dollar-plus cost of the Olympic housing, which means that municipal taxpayers probably will. The Olympic housing is the biggest and most expensive cost of the games (barring massive cost overruns on the new stadium or other facilities, of course), but there is no credible costing for this big-ticket item.

The default position is Rule 40 of the International Olympic Committee, which states: 'Rule 40 (Liabilities) - The NOC (National Olympic Committee - or Canadian Olympic Association), the OCOG (Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games - or TO-Bid) and the host city are jointly and severally liable for all commitments entered into individually or collectively concerning the organization and staging of the Olympic Games, excluding the financial responsibility for the organization and staging of such Games, which shall be entirely assumed jointly and severally by the host city and the OCOG, without prejudice to any liability of any other party, particularly as may result from any guarantee given pursuant to Rule 37, paragraph 5. The IOC (International Olympic Committee) shall have no financial responsibility whatsoever in respect thereof.'

In other words, the entire financial responsibility for the games falls onto the broad shoulders of Toronto taxpayers, unless some can be foisted onto other taxpayers' shoulders.

It's astonishing and bordering on unbelievable that, about four years after David Crombie started his quest to bring the 2008 Olympics to Toronto, there is still no authoritative and independent financial assessment of the cost of the games.

City Council is to vote in a couple of weeks on what is the biggest and most costly mega-project in the history of Toronto and there is no detailed financial plan. This vote was supposed to take place last November, but was delayed apparently because bid officials after years of trying couldn't patch together even a basic set of numbers. And they still haven't produced a complete financial assessment, let alone an independent one.

In typical Olympic brinkmanship, we are being told to embrace the Olympic genie because now provincial taxpayers are going to share the multi-billion financial risk of the games, along with municipal taxpayers.

The Olympic bid has mostly failed to meet even the minimal standards set by Toronto City Council back in July of 1998. It has absolutely failed to meet the standards for a socially, environmentally and financially responsible games as set by Bread Not Circuses earlier that year.

But that's okay, because taxpayers in Thunder Bay, Sarnia and Cornwall are going to take a share of the Olympic deficit.

As they say down in Sydney, which is experiencing its own pre-Olympic financial meltdown: "No worries, mate."

Olympic Bid Organizers Demonstrate Absolute Contempt for the People of Toronto on the Housing Issue

Olympic Bid Organizers Demonstrate Absolute Contempt for the People of Toronto on the Housing Issue

February 2, 2000, Toronto Star

Dear Editor:

Re: Toronto, 9 cities to bid for 2008 Games (Feb. 2, 2000)

Once again the Toronto Olympic organizers are showing absolute contempt for the people of Toronto by claiming that "as a result of the Olympics, the housing issue is on the agenda."

Where have the TO-Bid organizers been?

It's due to the tireless organizing of diverse organizations such as the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee, Putting Housing Back on the Public Agenda, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, and the Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness as well as thousands of people from all walks of life that homelessness is now considered a disaster!

In fact, Toronto City Council was the first city of many to officially declare homelessness a national disaster.

Housing advocates and the city continue to lobby the provincial and the federal government to adopt the National Housing Strategy of providing an additional 1% of budgetary spending to create a national housing program.

Will the Olympics solve the housing crisis as the TO-Bid organizers lead us to believe?

Unfortunately, the answer is absolutely not.

In fact, the sad reality is the Master Plan going before City Council is an absolute failure on the housing front. There is no concrete housing plan to develop social, non-profit and truly affordable housing even 8 years from now. No Olympic money from either TV revenues or corporate sponsorship is going towards building housing.

The Toronto Olympic Organizers have some options.

They can endorse the national housing strategy and the 1% solution.

They can push the provincial and federal government to commit to the National Housing Strategy as part of the Olympic bid so that housing can be built ahead of the Olympics.

Otherwise, the Olympic bid doesn't put housing on the agenda - it will do the opposite.

We know from the experiences of Atlanta and other cities that people who remain homeless during the Olympic experience are arrested under new bylaws, are evicted from squats and outside sleeping locations and lose their rights to due process under the law.

I think many Torontonians would prefer to see City staff and politicians attend to the real needs of homeless and low-income tenants here in Toronto today instead of a bid process that has no guarantees of housing at all.

Sincerely,

Cathy Crowe, RN

Toronto Disaster Relief Committee

Atlanta's Olympic Legacy: More Poverty and Less Freedom

The Salt Lake Tribune, March 26, 1999, by Shawn Foster, The Salt Lake Tribune

In many U.S. cities, being poor and living on the streets are enough to land you in jail. It only gets worse when the Olympics are in town.

"Before the Olympics, the city of Atlanta passed six ordinances that essentially made it a crime to be homeless," said Gerald Weber, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia. "The city even offered free bus tickets to the homeless to leave the city."

Weber and Anita Beatty, executive director of the Atlanta Taskforce for the Homeless, spoke Thursday night at a public forum at St. Mark's Cathedral in Salt Lake City. The gathering was organized by the ACLU of Utah, Utah Housing Coalition and Salt Lake Impact 2002 and Beyond, a coalition representing ethnic-minority and low-income communities.

The pair listed a litany of ills that Atlanta's poor and middle-income families faced in the years before and after the Games.

Beatty remembered that she could not believe the news in 1990 that Atlanta had won the bid to host the Olympics.

"We couldn't understand why we would even go after the bid when we had the kind of poverty we did," Beatty said. "Thirty percent in Atlanta lives below the poverty line."

But the Olympics did come to Georgia, and business leaders there wanted the world to see a sanitized version of their state. Although Atlanta's six homeless ordinances were eventually thrown out by the courts, in the year before the Games, Beatty said that 10,000 homeless men were wrongfully arrested.

The Atlanta police, she said, had stacks of citations with "African-American male" and the charge pre-printed. And according to Weber, training manuals for Olympics security officers included instructions on who to arrest: non-white males.

There were, Weber said, some successes for those interested in defending constitutional rights. The Atlanta Organizing Committee agreed to allow protesters in 14 areas around the Olympic venues.

But the legacy of the Olympics in Atlanta, Beatty said, has been even greater poverty and erosion of freedom.

Some Atlanta businesses, she said, have attempted to feed the Olympic "lock-em-up" mentality by pushing for more street sweeps of the homeless. Another result of the Olympics, was the loss of four shelters with 300 beds that closed when they were sold to make room for athletic arenas.

Then there are the landlords who thought they could become millionaires by kicking out their tenants and renting out the apartments to Olympics fans.

"We've lost 10,000 units of low-income housing beginning two years before the Olympics," Beatty said. "They forced middle-income people out. They forced low-income people into the streets. Then after the Olympics, no one wanted to rent the apartments. We've seen community after community destroyed."

Atlanta is not alone among U.S. cities in its treatment of the homeless. And the Olympics are not the only cause for mistreatment of America's poor.

A 1996 report from the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty examined how 50 city governments addressed homelessness. Researchers found that more than half of the municipalities had conducted homeless sweeps and 38 percent had initiated crackdowns on street people, even though the daily cost of keeping the homeless in jail is about 25 percent higher than the cost of providing shelter, food and transportation.

Even so, Beatty warned, the Olympic organizers are a formidable foe for low-income advocates.

"The punishment that is meted out for criticism is incredible," she said. "My organization has been audited by everybody who has a calculator."

But Weber had a message of hope. Maybe the bribery scandal that has plagued the Salt Lake Olympic Organizing Committee will be a good thing.

"It seems there is more willingness to look at possible problems {for the Salt Lake Olympics}," Weber said, "if only to minimize any more negative publicity."

The Olympics, Homelessness, and Civil Rights

American Civil Liberties Union of Utah, ACLU Reporter, Fall 1999

By Karen Denton, Executive Director of the Homeless Children's Foundation

Tim Funk of Impact 2002 & Beyond sounded the warning bell for members of the Salt Lake County Homeless Co-ordinating Council in March. Not only will Salt Lake City welcome all those paying visitors from around the world for the 2002 Winter Olympic Games, but we will also host people "who will come without enough means to support themselves." That's a sobering thought for service providers for homeless and low-income people. These agencies already face high caseloads and service restrictions due to tighter donor dollars, housing shortages, and increasing pressure to disperse most homeless families away from the Salt Lake Community Shelter and Self-Sufficiency Center located in the Gateway area, near one of the proposed Olympic medal venues.

Civil libertarians also have cause for concern about the impending Olympics and the impact on low-income people. Many of these issues were outlined during a forum co-sponsored by the American Civil Liberties Union of Utah, the Utah Housing Coalition, and Impact 2002. Gerald Weber, the Legal Director of the ACLU of Georgia, and Anita Beatty, Co-President of the Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless, presented their experiences from the 1996 Summer Olympic Games and their recommendations for the 2002 event.

Weber and Beatty faced a variety of policies that were hostile to low-income and homeless communities, including:

Sweeps of homeless camps and gathering areas, particularly before conventions arrived in Atlanta;

The demolition of old buildings that might have been used as affordable housing;

The creation of homelessness by increased rents or rehabilitated motels and apartments, which forced out long-time residents and left them with no place to go;

The attempt to convert at least one single room occupancy (SRO) hotel into temporary housing for a sponsor's employees. Fortunately, this action was stopped when the state Housing Finance Authority said this was an illegal act because it partially subsidized the SRO with government money.

In addition, the Atlanta city government passed a series of ordinances that, for all intents and purposes, made

homelessness illegal. These new laws prohibited aggressive panhandling, lying down on a public park bench, either remaining in or walking across a public parking lot unless one had a car parked in that lot, and occupying vacant buildings.

The Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless discovered during a four month study that homeless individuals accounted for 11% of all arrests for the first three of the ordinances while housed people constituted only 1%. In the meantime, Atlanta built a new city jail, described in one article as "the first Olympic project completed on time." Additionally, the Task Force found that African Americans made up the largest numbers of homeless people arrested under the new ordinances. They estimated that Atlanta spent between \$300,000 and \$500,000 annually to incarcerate homeless detainees, which obviously took funding away from other programs such as housing.

Beatty and Weber recommended the repeal of the ordinances. Panhandling is already a violation here in Salt Lake City and we are starting to see increased harassment of people in the downtown area who are deemed undesirable by the police – street musicians, for example.

However, we are making some preparations to avoid the problems that Atlanta faced. Impact 2002 is seeking solutions to the housing problem, including possible state legislation allowing rent control (currently against state law) for the three months surrounding both the Olympics and Paralympics. Service providers have formed the Humanitarian Services Committee as a subcommittee to the Salt Lake Olympic Committee. This committee, headed by Linda Hilton, director of the Coalition of Religious Communities, has a litany of issues to discuss: transportation, security, civil rights, and housing among others.

Since the formation of the Humanitarian Services Committee, Hilton has already scored one victory. Pioneer Park was scheduled to be one of the medal ceremony venues, but unlike other proposed venues such as the City-County building, SLOC officials wanted to create a one-block security zone around the space. This would have deleteriously affected homeless services around the park. She protested the obvious bias and, as of this writing, Pioneer Park has been dropped from the list of ceremony sites.

In an April meeting with homeless advocates, Salt Lake Organizing Committee chief Mitt Romney stated publicly that SLOC will not advocate for sweeps of the homeless. It is now up to the community to keep SLOC to its word.

Help for homeless "not about Olympics"

The Sydney Morning Herald, August 23, 1999

By TIM JAMIESON, Urban Affairs Writer

A task force will target up to 200 of the city's long-term homeless in a \$1.2 million offensive Sydney City Council launched yesterday in the run-up to the Olympic Games.

Many of the homeless people are already known to welfare agencies, but it will be the job of the 12-strong task force to help them find shelter other than in parks and streets.

To stop the city's refuges becoming overrun during the Olympics, the Lord Mayor, Councillor Frank Sartor, appealed to people without accommodation or money to support themselves to steer clear of Sydney during the Games.

With a big rise in the numbers of budget travellers and people attracted by perceived job opportunities next September, Cr Sartor said: "The city is not a financial nirvana, and people need to make sure they have enough money to care for themselves and to get home again. "Also, people need to make sure they have somewhere to stay before coming."

The city's homeless are mainly men suffering from a combination of mental health, drug and alcohol problems. Some prefer to live on the streets rather than stay at refuges, which are already bursting.

The outreach team, which will operate seven days a week until 10pm, should be operating by January.

The council has set aside \$260,000 for the program, expected to be run by a welfare group. It is envisaged the team will remain in close contact with the target group, building up a profile and medical report on each individual. However, a council spokeswoman said none of the homeless people could be forced to take part and it would be up to police to move those sleeping rough.

Launching his strategy in Hyde Park, Cr Sartor denied the program was intended to sweep the streets clear of homeless people in time for the Olympics.

"Each and every one of these people is a human being. You have to go out and talk to these people and find out what their problems are. This is not about the Olympics."

He conceded the number of homeless people was increasing.

In 1992 the homeless persons information centre received more than 4,000 calls and helped find accommodation for 8,907 people.

Last year, the calls had soared to 18,703, and more than 26,000 people were found a bed.

THE TORONTO DISASTER RELIEF COMMITTEE

Endorses the following standards for the Toronto Bid

Towards a socially responsible Olympics Games: The Bread Not Circuses' standards for the Toronto Olympic bid

The Olympic Games, if staged in Toronto, will be the biggest and most costly mega-project in the history of our city. The costs are not only measured in the billions of public and private dollars required to stage the Games, but also in social and environmental terms.

Although the Games last only about two weeks, the financial, social and environmental impacts will last for years. While all the people of Toronto will share in the costs, without proper planning, any benefits will not be shared equally.

If Toronto is to bid on the Olympics it must set clear standards. The decision to proceed with the bid must not be based on carefully crafted and marketed images. The bid must take into account the real costs of the Olympics.

Bread Not Circuses' Olympic standards represent a way towards a socially responsible Games.

While they are not a complete list, these standards represent an attempt to codify the principles against which the Olympic bid should be judged.

A. Public participation

FULL INFORMATION: Detailed information to be publicly available on all aspects of the 2008 bid.

PUBLIC MEETINGS: Public meetings on all aspects of the bid. Recommendations should be incorporated

into the bid.

NEIGHBOURHOOD MEETINGS: Local neighbourhood meetings, including areas next to proposed Olympic venues.

INTERVENOR FUNDING: An intervenor fund to be established to allow independent groups to fully and properly evaluate the bid.

OLYMPIC STANDARDS: Standards for the Games to be developed by City Council, with the commitment of withdrawing the bid if the standards are not met.

CITY COUNCIL REVIEW: Public meeting of standing committee of City Council to review bid before the "intention" to bid for the 2008 Games is formally filed with IOC.

INDEPENDENT WATCHDOG: Ongoing, fully-supported, independent watchdog for Olympic bid and organizing committees.

FULL DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY: The bid committee, organizing committee and all other Olympic structures must be fully and democratically accountable to the residents and voters of the City of Toronto.

B. Financial guarantees

FIRM COMMITMENTS: Firm financial commitments from federal, provincial, other municipal governments and private sector.

RECOVER PUBLIC FUNDS: All public funds to be recovered.

FULL ACCOUNTING: All direct and indirect costs of bidding and organizing Games to be fully and publicly accounted.

INDEPENDENT ACCOUNTING: Independent financial assessment, including cost/benefit analysis.

OPPORTUNITY COSTING: Independent assessment of the opportunity costs of the Games; that is, the benefits that would be derived from a similar investment in other projects.

NO TAX INCREASE: No increase in municipal taxes or other levies.

CORPORATIONS TO SHARE RISKS: Corporate sponsors of the Games to share the financial and social risks.

IOC, COA TO SHARE RISKS: The International Olympic Committee and Canadian Olympic Association, as the chief financial beneficiaries of Olympic revenues, should share financial risks.

CLEAN GAMES: No bribes, no expensive gifts, no first-class airfare, luxury accommodation or other inducements to IOC members or other officials to support the Toronto Olympic bid.

SIMPLE GAMES: Functional rather than extravagant Games.

C. Social equity

REPRESENTATION: Bid and organizing committee to reflect make-up of Toronto, including representation for gender, racial, cross-cultural, and abilities.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING: Olympic housing to be 100% affordable and 60% social housing at the end of the Games.

ADDITIONAL HOUSING: Significantly more social and affordable housing than previously committed.

HOUSING PROTECTION: Protection for rental and ownership housing from development pressures, inflationary rent increases and related concerns.

HOUSING FOR HOMELESS: Funding and programs to ensure housing and services for homeless people.

NEW FACILITIES: Detailed list of new and upgraded affordable recreational facilities to be open to all users.

AFFORDABLE GAMES: Affordable games for low-income Torontonians. Low-cost or free tickets to events, including opening ceremonies and other events.

SOCIAL IMPACT: Full social impact assessment. Strategies for dealing with impacts to be incorporated into the bid.

SOCIAL INVESTMENT FUND: Social investment fund, under community control, to be created with Olympic revenues, with proceeds to socially useful projects.

VIOLENCE-FREE: Specific measures to address increase in violence against women associated with major sporting events.

NON-HARASSMENT: Specific measures to prevent harassment of homeless and street people.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: Specific measures to protect civil liberties before and during Games, including freedom of expression; freedom of peaceful assembly; and freedom of association.

D. Sexual equality

SEXUAL PARITY: Sexual parity on all Olympic committees, in staffing and in other structures.

CHILDCARE: Daycare facilities at all Olympic venues.

GENDER IMBALANCE: Correct the imbalance of sexes at Games.

E. Equal opportunity

EMPLOYMENT EQUITY: Employment equity in all hiring.

ACCESSIBLE GAMES: Accessible Games for persons with disabilities

F. Healthy Olympics

HEALTHY SPONSORS: No sponsorship from corporations promoting unhealthy activities.

G. Environment

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: Full environmental assessment. Strategies for dealing with impacts to be incorporated into the bid.

AIR QUALITY: Detailed plan to protect and improve air quality.

WATER QUALITY: Detailed plan to protect / improve water quality.

WASTE DISPOSAL: Detailed plan regarding waste disposal.

TRAFFIC: Detailed environmental assessment of traffic and transportation plans.

GREEN CONSTRUCTION: Detailed plan to ensure venues are constructed in an environmentally friendly way.

RECYCLING: Comprehensive plan to ensure the materials used in bid and Games are recycled or reused.

WATERFRONT PROTECTION: Enhanced waterfront protection, including western beaches.

H. Jobs

NO JOB LOSS: No job loss in Toronto's municipal sector as a result of Toronto's Olympic bid.

PROTECT LAND: Protect industrial land for industrial jobs.

UNION-WAGE POLICY: Union-wage parity for Olympic workers.

UNION-HIRING: Union-hiring for all Olympic jobs and materials, including construction, tourism, hotels, apparel, hospitality.

CONTRACT COMPLIANCE: Contract compliance policies, including equity in hiring.

WAGE PROTECTION: Wage protection fund for workers, if employers violate employment laws during any Olympic project.

VOLUNTEERISM: Volunteer labour should not be used to replace paid workers. Specific measures should be adopted to ensure existing charities do not lose volunteers to the Games. Job training should be incorporated into volunteer work.

I. Duration of the standards

LASTING STANDARDS: Olympic standards shall be in place for the duration of the Olympic bid and throughout the Games.

LONG-TERM: The financial, social and environmental impact assessments should not end at the Games, but should take, at a minimum, a five-year term from the end of the Games.

WITHDRAWAL OF BID: Failure to follow the standards through the first year of the bid process shall require the withdrawal of the Toronto 2008 Olympics bid.

COMMITMENT TO STANDARDS: No Olympic bid shall proceed if the standards are not met.

For more information, contact TDRC at tdrc@tdrc.net

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Toronto Disaster Relief Committee

After 14 years of advocacy, activism and action, Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC) is closing.
[Click here for a synopsis of our work.](#)

Toronto Star, June 8, 2012:
[Toronto Disaster Relief Committee folds after 14 years of spotlighting homeless pdf version](#)

Media – please call and leave a message with Jon Alexander 416-805-4332

Students – please use the extensive resources on our website first before contacting any of the individuals and groups below.

Email torontodisasterrelief@gmail.com. We will reply to you ASAP.

If you have questions about housing issues in Toronto please contact Ann Fitzpatrick from the Housing Action Now (HAN) network at 416-924-4640, ext. 3482. You can email her at amfitzpatrick@torontocas.ca

If you have a question about a provincial or national housing issue, please contact Michael Shapcott, co-chair of the National Housing and Homelessness Network (NHHN) at 416-972-1010, ext. 231. You can email him at michael@wellesleyinstitute.com Website: <http://wellesleyinstitute.com>

This website will be update regularly.

Disaster Declaration 1998

[TDRC's 1998 National Disaster Declaration \(English and French\)](#)

[TDRC's 1998 State of Emergency Declaration \(HTML\)](#)

[TDRC's 1998 State of Emergency Declaration \(pdf\)](#)

[Print this page](#)

Monthly Homeless Memorial

Join us at the monthly homeless memorial vigil. We meet on the second Tuesday of every month at 12 noon, outside the Church of the Holy Trinity, just behind the Eaton Centre. We remember all those who have died on the streets of Toronto as a result of homelessness. A free lunch is served inside the church after the vigil. For more information email Greg Cook, gregc@sanctuarytoronto.ca.

More info:

www.holytrinitytoronto.org/wp/justice-work/homeless-memorial/

The 600th name Bruce McLeod

December 8, 2009, at Toronto's Homeless Memorial, on the occasion of adding the 600th name.

Ending homelessness in Toronto

The Blueprint to End Homelessness by Michael Shapcott and the Wellesley Institute provides a detailed history, an overview and costed solutions to Toronto's housing crisis.

As we move on, we invite all Canadians to engage in the struggle to end injustice. In the words of our colleague and supporter, a fellow combatant in the fight to end homelessness, the late Jack Layton: "My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world." – TDRC

Toronto Disaster Relief Committee

www.tdrc.net



Toronto Disaster Relief Committee: 14 years of advocacy, activism and action

After 14 years of advocacy, activism and action, Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC) is closing. The following is a synopsis of our work.

The homelessness disaster unfolds

Mass homelessness became common in Canada starting in the 1980s. As the market economy de-industrialized creating more low wage jobs, senior levels of government retreated from social spending, instead pursuing American-style practices of dealing with social issues.

In the 1990s, the cancellation of the federal and provincial housing programs, cuts to social assistance rates and reduced social spending created a perfect storm. Homelessness not only grew but became a chronic state. Social service agencies were stretched thinner and overall conditions worsened. Old diseases like tuberculosis returned. More homeless people were forced into a nightly migration relying on church basements for emergency shelter, or were forced to sleep outside, sometimes creating squats. Homeless deaths were on the rise.

A unique collection of individuals came together in the spring of 1998 to address the growing problem of homelessness in Toronto and Canada. The group included a lawyer, a priest, a retired Member of Parliament, a retired teacher, a street nurse, a community organizer, a formerly homeless man, a university professor of social work, a housing advocate, a real estate investor and a Bay Street investment manager.

We first met in a small and bare meeting room at Sherbourne and Dundas and decided to declare homelessness a national disaster as our first undertaking. The Toronto Disaster Relief Committee was born. In October 1998 we held a press conference and public meeting at the Church of the Holy Trinity to issue the 'State of Emergency Declaration' which launched our national campaign declaring homelessness a national disaster.

<http://tdrc.net/disaster-declaration-declaration-d-etat-d-urgence.html>

The campaign focus was twofold: to call for the 1% solution--a reinvestment in a national housing program--and to seek disaster relief funds to deal with the immediate emergency of homelessness across the country.

<http://tdrc.net/1-solution.html>

As a "committee" we planned for a brief and focused existence. We believed that Canadians, when made aware of the inequity and life threatening conditions facing homeless citizens, would demand change. As Ursula Franklin pointed out at our media conference: "we have the legal and technical means to end it (homelessness)". Unfortunately, the problem has become entrenched; it has become a "normal" part of what Canada is. The solution has been ignored by policy makers.

Advocacy, activism and action

TDRC played a very important role in raising the visibility of, and the strategies for preventing and ending, homelessness. An important part of its work was as a catalyst and a partner: it helped to frame the discourse locally, provincially and nationally. The work around the Disaster Declaration, the 1% Solution and the ongoing analysis and strategic responses was critically important and had a real impact. Our collaboration through the National Housing and Homelessness Network and the interventions at Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) housing ministers' meetings, including Fredericton, London, Quebec City, Gatineau and Winnipeg, were also key in shaping the national agenda. A strong working relationship that developed with municipalities and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, thanks to Jack Layton. In all this work, TDRC brought visibility to the issues, framed the debate, powerfully advocated for solutions, inspired, supported and strengthened the work of many local groups across the country and achieved real impact. TDRC proved to be a durable base both to support local, provincial and national campaigns that achieved some important successes, and also a place that trained and inspired a significant group of housing advocates across the country to take action in their own communities.

Perhaps our most important impact, beyond framing the debate, was to achieve a series of significant wins at the national, provincial and local levels. Whether as a linchpin, initiator, planner or supporter, TDRC's engagement in the collaborative nation-wide fight to improve the issue was vital.

At the national and provincial level, some of the key wins included:

At the national and provincial level, some of the key wins included:

- the national homelessness strategy of 1999 (this included the Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative (SCPI) later renamed Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) plus the enhancement of the federal housing repair program - essentially the emergency relief funding we were calling for)
- the FPT Affordable Housing Framework Agreement of 2001
- the extension of the Affordable Housing Program in 2003
- \$1.4 billion in affordable housing funding in 2006 (from the 2005 Parliament)
- a five-year extension of the national homelessness and housing repair programs in 2008 (re-announced in the summer of 2011)
- \$2b+ affordable housing funding in the 2009 stimulus budget.

Much of this funding was matched by provinces and territories, and several jurisdictions have added their own initiatives (Alberta, Newfoundland and Labrador). There has been other good work that has grown out of, or been inspired by TDRC's work including international housing rights work, Ontario Human Rights Commission housing rights work and the Charter Challenge on the right to housing which was filed in the courts November 2011.

At the local level in Toronto where we have been based, TDRC worked diligently to respond to the conditions homeless people faced.

✓ TDRC was extremely influential in the opening of hundreds of new emergency shelter beds which set a precedent for other cities. This included leveraging empty and/or available buildings for emergency shelter such as the Moss Park and Fort York armouries (multiple times), institutional buildings such as the old Princess Margaret Hospital, Metro Hall, Doctors Hospital and the old nursing residence at 2 Murray St.

✓ TDRC made visible the unhealthy and inhumane shelter conditions that existed in many shelters and Out of the Cold programs. This led to new and revised municipal Shelter Standards; they are considered a best practice model by other municipalities. In addition, patterns of discrimination (for transgendered people and same sex partners) were exposed and remediated.

✓ TDRC addressed the growing impact of inclement weather--both heat and cold--on people who were homeless or underhoused. This resulted in the establishment of heat-alert and cold-alert protocols that focused on vulnerable populations including people who were homeless, the elderly and shut-ins. These too were considered best practices and modeled by other cities in Canada. TDRC campaigns on this issue helped social service agencies to leverage valuable municipal support and resources to augment those provided by charitable or non-profits such as Project Water and Project Warmth.

✓ TDRC helped to strengthen the 'community's voice' at city hall through strong and effective participation and agenda shaping at various committees including the Homeless Advisory Committee on Homeless and Socially Isolated Persons and the Board of Health.

✓ TDRC established the monthly Homeless Memorial which includes not only the tracking of homeless deaths but advocacy and research to expose the gaps in political responsibility for this issue. The monthly memorial, founded in October 2000, continues to be updated and commemorated monthly. Located at the Church of the Holy Trinity, it is now supported by a committee which includes the church, homeless and formerly homeless individuals and community agencies. The memorial is so innovative it has been emulated by other cities who want to create their own Homeless Memorial. In addition it won NOW Magazine's Best Memorial Award in 2005. Sadly, over 600 names are now on the memorial board.

✓ TDRC launched a number of other advocacy groups (the Recession Relief Coalition, Housing not War) as a means to connect housing and homelessness to broader economic and political issues and movements.

✓ TDRC's work to support Toronto's waterfront encampment of homeless people known as Tent City (1999-2002) is well documented in Michael Connolly's documentary film 'Shelter from the Storm'. The film chronicles the delivery of disaster relief including pre-fab housing to the site, press conferences, and our joint advocacy efforts which always ensured a voice for the residents. The post-eviction rent supplement program that enabled everyone to be housed was ultimately studied by the City of Toronto and proven successful. People's quality of life improved dramatically after being housed.

The disaster remains as does the need to end it

Although the political wins we have been involved in have been enormous we are painfully aware that they fall short in addressing the inequities that exist and the lack of a national housing policy. Many of these victories have been hard-fought but short-term, either a year or two or sometimes three (the 2008 Homelessness Partnering Initiative and Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program extension for five years is the longest that we have achieved), and have necessitated constant campaigning just to preserve the short-term gains. An equally important concern is that the funding that has been secured has always been far short of the actual need. Sadly, we have also witnessed diminished political commitment to protect and enhance emergency responses to homelessness such as shelter, outreach and adequate social assistance rates. To this day we are fighting to prevent the closing of the School House, a city-funded shelter known for its successful harm-reduction approach.

There is ample research to demonstrate that the deep structural issues including inequality and poverty are growing more severe and that rates of homelessness will continue to grow.

All polls show Canadians care about homelessness and want it ended. The 1% versus 99% statistics of the 'Occupy' movement clearly demonstrate that people want to see a massive redistribution of Canada's income and wealth. This is the biggest, most important issue of our time. This struggle includes ending homelessness and requires the now emerging vast and diverse social movement to force change, something we support and will be engaged in as individuals.

Thanks to so many

The decision to end our work has not been an easy one. We discussed and debated the ending of TDRC many times. Often, we appealed to our supporters for a few more dollars to keep our doors open or our phone on for another few months. We downsized, closing our office but remaining a virtual entity. But, eventually, we realized that this hard next step, the decision to permanently close TDRC, had to be taken.

TDRC has been a successful advocacy group, primarily because of the people who were part of our work. This includes the founding Steering Committee members who initiated and campaigned for many years, and newer Steering Committee members who brought fresh energy and ideas with their passion for social justice. Over the 14 years we benefited from highly skilled and committed staff and countless volunteers. We received donations, large and small, from supporters. There are simply too many labour unions, faith communities, social justice networks, students and individuals to thank. People affected by homelessness have always been our moral compass and for their support and involvement we are especially appreciative.

We are very honoured that the City of Toronto Archives has accepted our materials and records which will be permanently housed in their collection and made available for researchers, historians and students. York University's Homeless Hub has accepted our media records which cover homelessness both locally and nationally.

As we move on, we invite all Canadians to engage in the struggle to end injustice. In the words of our colleague and supporter, a fellow combatant in the fight to end homelessness, the late Jack Layton: "My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world.

For more information please visit our website www.tdrc.net or contact us at torontodisasterrelief@gmail.com

Toronto Disaster Relief Committee folds after 14 years of spotlighting homeless

June 08, 2012

Laurie Monsebraaten

It was the champion of the homeless.

Born in the late 1990s, when a combination of deep cuts to welfare and affordable housing were pushing hundreds of destitute Torontonians onto the streets, the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee firmly established itself as the voice of the most vulnerable.

The social activists, academics and business people who made up the TDRC — as it was also called — took up the cause with evangelistic fervour.

In the fall of 1998, a cluster of homeless deaths and dire warnings of a harsh winter ahead became the ominous backdrop to its concerted cry for help.

Frustrated by how quickly politicians dispatch money and even the army during ice storms and prairie flooding, yet ignore those perpetually in urgent need, the group staged a news conference on the steps of a downtown church and demanded the federal government declare homelessness a national disaster.



Sleep-ins, like this one at City Hall in November 2004, were a way for the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee to draw attention to the plight of the homeless. This is Nancy Baker, 44, who had been off the street for 8 months and had earlier joked that the group was asking her to spend another night on the street.

PETER POWER/TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO

They also called on all levels of government to commit to spending an additional 1 per cent of their budgets on affordable housing, with immediate emergency funding to help the country's swelling homelessness population.

It was a call to action that swept the nation, leaving a legacy that endures today.

The TDRC folded this week, felled by a lack of funding, shifting public interest and an inability to attract new blood to carry on the fight.

It was 14 years old.

For Sean Gadon, director of Toronto's affordable housing office, who worked closely with the group, TDRC's death is bittersweet.

"I'm disappointed they are gone," he said. "But the sector and the country and the city in particular are so much richer because they were there and helped in a very significant way to put these issues on the public agenda."

The TDRC's way of cutting through the complex roots of homelessness to the human stories of those suffering on the streets had a powerful impact on politicians, noted Charles Pascal, a former president of the Atkinson Charitable Foundation.

"TDRC really made people feel uncomfortable. That was their role," he said.

The group's Oct. 8, 1998, plea at the Church of the Holy Trinity, next door to the Eaton Centre, made front-page headlines and topped national newscasts across the country.

Toronto and other large Canadian cities were quick to declare homelessness a national disaster that fall. Ottawa refused, but appointed its first minister responsible for fighting homelessness in 1999. And money started to flow.

Since then, more than \$1 billion in federal funds has been earmarked for emergency programs to help the homeless, a lasting legacy recently reaffirmed by the Harper government.

Ottawa has yet to commit to the group's so-called 1-per-cent solution to kick-start a national affordable housing strategy. But in part because of the TDRC's work, municipalities, provinces, chambers of commerce, faith groups and numerous social agencies have taken up the charge.

“One of the things they did was put a very human face on why action is required,” said Gadon. “People today have come to understand that the need for action is also deeply rooted in the economic, social, community and health consequences of not acting.”

Spadina MP Olivia Chow and her late husband, Jack Layton, were strong political allies of TDRC. As president of the Canadian Federation of Municipalities in 2001, Layton turned TDRC’s quest for a national affordable housing strategy into a local priority across the country. As federal NDP leader, Layton squeezed \$1.4 billion for housing out of Paul Martin’s 2005 budget, Chow noted.

TDRC’s eclectic make-up was key to its success. Street nurse Cathy Crowe, outreach workers Beric German and Bob Rose and retired NDP MP Dan Heap, were often the public face of the group. Along with the homeless and other social activists, they held memorials for those who died on the streets, staged “sleep-ins” at Nathan Phillips Square and videotaped squalid conditions in city shelters.

The group’s strength behind the scenes included University of Toronto social work professor David Hulchanski, housing activist Michael Shapcott, businessman John Andras, realtor David Walsh and lawyer Peter Rosenthal. They provided academic, legal, theoretical and fiscal analysis to bolster the group’s activism.

Their opposition to the eviction of people from Tent City — a four-year encampment of homeless people on the eastern waterfront that ended in 2002 — pushed former mayor Mel Lastman to pry money out of the provincial Mike Harris Tories to create a portable housing allowance.

Toronto’s current Streets to Homes program can be directly linked to TDRC’s efforts during the Tent City years, Gadon said. The initiative is now funded under Ottawa’s Investment in Affordable Housing Program.

The city’s cold and heat alerts, championed by the TDRC, are now common in cities across the country and go beyond helping the homeless to supporting isolated seniors and other shut-ins, he added.

But TDRC’s momentum faltered as the world plunged into economic uncertainty in 2008. With business, unions and private donors under siege, there was less money to bankroll the group’s operations. More poignantly, there was less energy.

“Organizations have their life cycle, and the time had come to close it up and move on to other things,” said Andras, of Mackie Research Capital Corp., co-founder in 1993 of Project Warmth, an initiative that handed out more than 150,000 sleeping bags to the homeless over seven years.

Although the strength of the organization was its continuity of membership, it was also a weakness.

“As we all aged together and got tired together, we didn’t seem to be able to bring in the younger people and fresh blood,” he said. “To some extent that younger generation got involved in things like the Occupy movement and other initiatives.”

For Pascal, TDRC died too young.

“This wake ought to be a wake-up call, because the work needs to continue in some sort of new expression,” he said.

Crowe’s 2004 economic justice fellowship from the Atkinson Foundation helped support TDRC’s crusading work on homelessness for five years. But since then, the lack of funding has brought struggle.

Last year, the group closed its office in the Church of the Holy Trinity and became a virtual operation. This spring, Crowe gave up her cellphone.

“The decision to end our work has not been an easy one,” she said. “Eventually, we realized that this hard next step . . . had to be taken.”

The group’s records and materials will be permanently housed in the Toronto Archives and made available to researchers, historians and students. York University’s Homeless Hub will keep TDRC’s media records, which cover homelessness both locally and nationally.

But Chow is among many who aren’t ready to give up TDRC’s quest.

“To quote Lastman — one of the first mayors to sign the disaster declaration in 1998 — Canadians are still asking: ‘Where’s the money for affordable housing?’ ” she said.

“It’s still a disaster when people sleep on the street and can’t find affordable homes.”

A memorial for TDRC will be held June 12 at the Church of the Holy Trinity, 10 Trinity Square. It will be part of the regular monthly homeless memorial service — another initiative sparked by the group that will live on after it is gone.